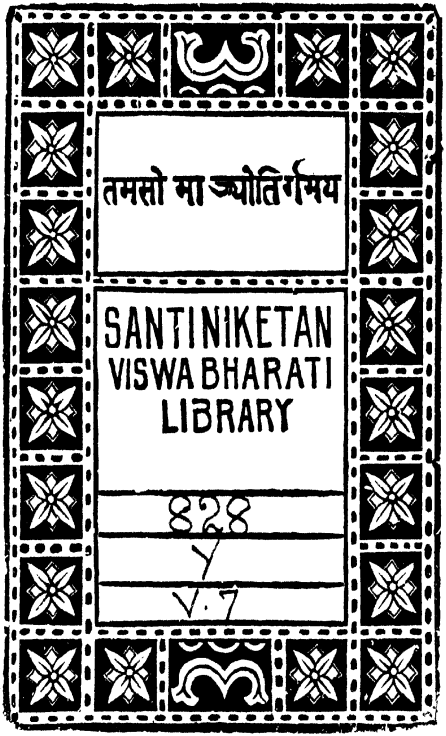

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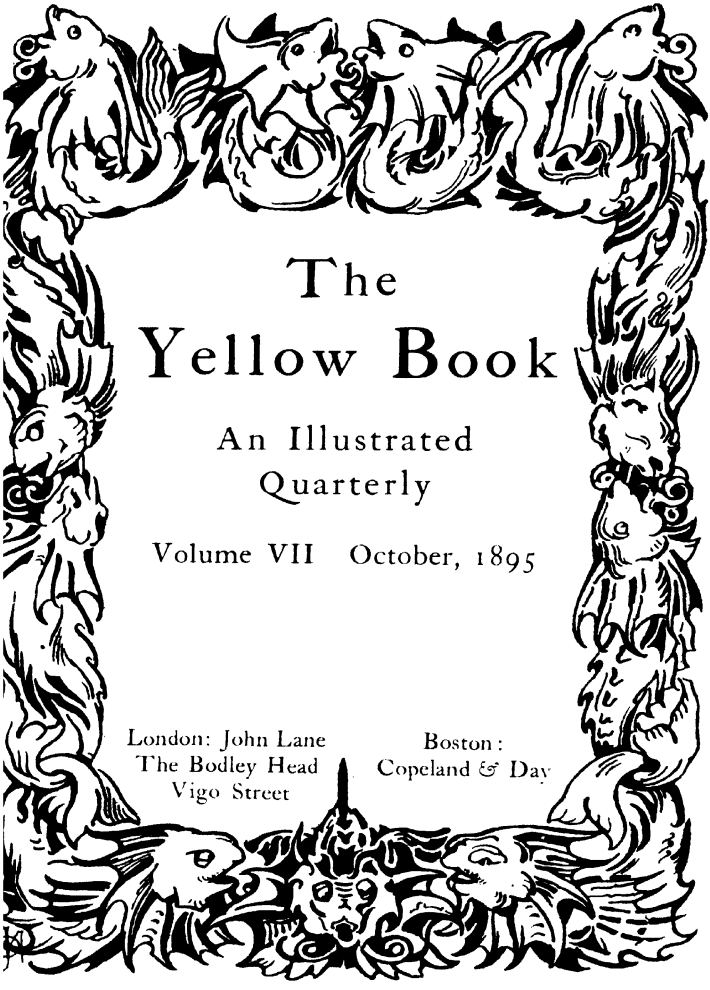
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The Yellow Book

Volume VII October, 1895

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The Yellow Book

An Illustrated Quarterly

Volume VII October, 1895

London: John Lane
The Bodley Head
Vigo Street

Boston:
Copeland & Day

Ballantyne Press
London & Edinburgh

The Bride

By Frank Bramley, A.R.A.



A Seventh-story Heaven

By Richard Le Gallienne

"Dans un grenier qu'on est bien à vingt ans!"

At one end of the city that I love there is a tall dingy pile of offices that has evidently seen more prosperous fortunes. It is not the aristocratic end. It is remote from the lordly street of the fine shops of the fair women, where in the summer afternoons the gay bank clerks parade arm-in-arm in the wake of the tempestuous petticoat. It lies aside from the great exchange which looks like a scene from Romeo and Juliet in the moonlight, from the town-hall from whose clocked and gilded cupola ring sweet chimes at midnight, and whence, throned above the city, a golden Britannia, in the sight of all men, is seen visibly ruling the waves; while in the square below the death of Nelson is played all day in stone, with a frieze of his noble words about the pedestal—England expects! What an influence that stirring challenge has yet upon the hearts of men may be seen by any one who will study the faces of the busy, imaginative cotton-brokers, who, in the thronged and humming mornings, sell what they have never seen to a customer they will never see.

In fact, the end I mean is just the very opposite end to that. It is the end where the cotton that everybody sells and nobody buys *is* seen, piled in great white stacks, or swinging in the air from the necks of mighty cranes, that could nip up an elephant with

with as little ado, and set him down on the wharf, with a box on his ugly ears for his cowardly trumpeting. It is the end that smells of tar, the domain of the harbour-masters, where the sailor finds a "home,"—not too sweet, and where the wild sea is tamed in a maze of granite squares and basins; the end where the riggings and buildings rise side by side, and a clerk might swing himself out upon the yards from his top-floor desk. Here is the Custom House, and the conversation that shines is full of freightage and dock dues; here are the shops that sell nothing but oilskins, sextants and parrots, and here the taverns do a mighty trade in rum.

It was in this quarter for a brief sweet time that Love and Beauty made their strange home, as though a pair of halcyons should choose to nest in the masthead of a cattleship. Love and Beauty chose this quarter, as alas, Love and Beauty must choose so many things—for its cheapness. Love and Beauty were poor, and office rents in this quarter were exceptionally low. But what should Love and Beauty do with an office? Love was a poor poet in need of a room for his bed and his rhymes, and Beauty was a little blue-eyed girl who loved him.

It was a shabby forbidding place, gloomy and comfortless as a warehouse on the banks of Styx. No one but Love and Beauty would have dared to choose it for their home. But Love and Beauty have a great confidence in themselves—a confidence curiously supported by history—and they never had a moment's doubt that this place was as good as another for an earthly Paradise. So Love signed an agreement for one great room at the very top, the very masthead of the building, and Beauty made it pretty with muslin curtains, flowers, and dainty makeshifts of furniture, but chiefly with the light of her own heavenly face. A stroke of luck coming one day to the poet, the lovers, with that extravagance which the poor alone have the courage to enjoy procured

procured a piano on the kind-hearted hire-purchase system, a system specially conceived for lovers. Then, indeed, for many a wonderful night that room was not only on the seventh floor, but in the seventh heaven ; and as Beauty would sit at the piano, with her long hair flying loose, and her soul like a whirl of starlight about her brows, a stranger peering in across the soft lamplight, seeing her face, hearing her voice, would deem that the long climb, flight after flight of dreary stair, had been appropriately rewarded by a glimpse of Heaven.

Certainly it must have seemed a strange contrast from the life about and below it. The foot of that infernal stair plunged in the warm rum-and-thick-twist atmosphere of a sailors' tavern—and "The Jolly Shipmates" was a house of entertainment by no means to be despised. Often have I sat there with the poet, drinking the whisky from which Scotland takes its name, among wondering sea-boots and sou'-westers, who could make nothing of that wild hair and that still wilder talk.

From the kingdom of rum and tar, you mounted into a zone of commission agents and ship-brokers, a chill unoccupied region, in which every small office-door bore the names of half-a-dozen different firms, and yet somehow could not contrive to look busy. Finally came an airy echoing landing, a region of empty rooms, which the landlords in vain recommended as studios to a city that loved not art. Here dwelt the keeper and his kind-hearted little wife, and no one besides save Love and Beauty. There was thus a feeling of rarefaction in the atmosphere, as though at this height it was only the Alpine flora of humanity that could find root and breathing. But once along the bare passage and through a certain door, and what a sudden translation it was into a gracious world of books and flowers and the peace they always bring.

Once

Once upon a time, in that enchanted past where dwell all the dreams we love best, precisely—with loving punctuality—at five in the afternoon, a pretty girlish figure, like Persephone escaping from the shades, stole through the rough sailors at the foot of that sordid Jacob's ladder and made her way to the little Heaven at the top.

I shall not describe her, for the good reason that I cannot. Leonardo, ever curious of the beauty that was most strangely exquisite, once in an inspired hour painted such a face, a face wrought of the porcelain of earth with the art of Heaven. But, whoever should paint it, God certainly made it—must have been the comment of any one who caught a glimpse of that little figure vanishing heavenwards up that stair, like an Ascension of Fra Angelico's—that is any one interested in art and angels.

She had not long to wait outside the door she sought, for the poet, who had listened all day for the sound, had ears for the whisper of her skirts as she came down the corridor, and before she had time to knock had already folded her in his arms. The two babes in that thieves' wood of commission agents and ship-brokers stood silent together for a moment, in the deep security of a kiss such as the richest millionaire could never buy—and then they fell to comparing notes of their day's work. The poet had had one of his rare good days. He had made no money, his post had been even more disappointing than usual,—but he had written a poem, the best he had ever written, he said, as he always said of his last new thing. He had been burning to read it to somebody all afternoon—had with difficulty refrained from reading it to the loquacious little keeper's wife as she brought him some coals—so it was not to be expected that he should wait a minute before reading it to her whom indeed it strove to celebrate. With arms round each other's necks, they bent over the table littered with the

the new-born poem, all blots and dashes like the first draft of a composer's score, and the poet, deftly picking his way among the erasures and interlineations, read aloud the beautiful words—with a full sense of their beauty !—to ears that deemed them more beautiful even than they were. The owners of this now valuable copyright allow me to irradiate my prose with three of the verses.

"Ah! what," half-chanted, half-crooned the poet—

> "Ah! what a garden is your hair!—
> Such treasure as the kings of old,
> In coffers of the beaten gold,
> Laid up on earth—and left it there."

So tender a reference to hair whose beauty others beside the poet had loved must needs make a tender interruption—the only kind of interruption the poet could have forgiven—and "Who," he continued—

> "Who was the artist of your mouth?
> What master out of old Japan
> Wrought it so dangerous to man"

And here it was but natural that laughter and kisses should once more interrupt—

> "Those strange blue jewels of your eyes,
> Painting the lily of your face,
> What goldsmith set them in their place—
> Forget-me-nots of Paradise.
>
> "And that blest river of your voice,
> Whose merry silver stirs the rest
> Of waterlilies in your breast"

At last, in spite of more interruptions, the poem came to an end

end—whereupon, of course, the poet immediately read it through once more from the beginning, its personal and emotional elements, he felt, having been done more justice on a first reading than its artistic excellencies.

"Why, darling, it is splendid," was his little sweetheart's comment; "you know how happy it makes me to think it was written for me, don't you?" And she took his hands and looked up at him with eyes like the morning sky.

Romance in poetry is almost exclusively associated with very refined ethereal matters, stars and flowers and such like—happily, in actual life it is often associated with much humbler objects. Lovers, like children, can make their paradises out of the quaintest materials. Indeed, our paradises, if we only knew, are always cheap enough; it is our hells that are so expensive. Now these lovers like, if I mistake not, many other true lovers before and since—when they were particularly happy, when some special piece of good luck had befallen them, could think of no better paradise than a little dinner together in their seventh-story heaven. "Ah! wilderness were Paradise enow!"

To-night was obviously such an occasion. But, alas! where was the money to come from? They didn't need much—for it is wonderful how happy you can be on five shillings if you only know how. At the same time it is difficult to be happy on ninepence—which was the entire fortune of the lovers at the moment. Beauty laughingly suggested that her celebrated hair might prove worth the price of their dinner. The poet thought a pawnbroker might surely be found to advance ten shillings on his poem—the original MS. too—else had they nothing to pawn, save a few gold and silver dreams which they couldn't spare. What was to be done? Sell some books, of course! It made them shudder to think how many poets they had eaten in this fashion.

It

It was sheer cannibalism—but what was to be done! Their slender stock of books had been reduced entirely to poetry. If there had only been a philosopher or a modern novelist, the sacrifice wouldn't have seemed so unnatural. And then Beauty's eyes fell upon a very fat informing-looking volume on the poet's desk.

"Wouldn't this do?" she said.

"Why, of course!" he exclaimed; "the very thing. A new history of socialism just sent me for review. Hang the review; we want our dinner, don't we, little one? And then I've read the preface, and looked through the index—quite enough to make a column of—with a plentiful supply of general principles thrown in! Why, of course, there's our dinner, for certain, dull and indigestible as it looks. It's worth fifty minor poets at old Moser's. Come along. . . ."

So off went the happy pair—ah! how much happier was Beauty than ever so many fine ladies one knows who have only, so to say, to rub their wedding-rings for a banquet to rise out of the ground, with the most distinguished guests around the table, champagne of the best, and conversation of the worst.

Old Moser found histories of socialism profitable, more profitable perhaps than socialism, and he actually gave five-and-sixpence for the volume. With the ninepence already in their pockets, you will see that they were now possessors of quite a small fortune. Six-and-threepence! it wouldn't pay for one's lunch nowadays. Ah! but that is because the poor alone know the art of dining.

You needn't wish to be much happier and merrier than those two lovers, as they gaily hastened to that bright and cosy corner of the town where those lovely ham-and-beef shops make glad the faces of the passers-by. O those hams with their honest shining faces,

faces, polished like mahogany—and the man inside so happy all day slicing them with those wonderful long knives (which, of course, the superior class of reader has never seen) worn away to a veritable thread, a mere wire, but keen as Excalibur. Beauty used to calculate in her quaint way how much steel was worn away with each pound of ham, and how much therefore went to the sandwich. And what an artist was the carver! What a true eye, what a firm flexible wrist—never a shaving of fat too much—he was too great an artist for that. Then there were those dear little cream cheeses and those little brown jugs of yellow cream, come all the way from Devonshire—you could hear the cows lowing across the rich pasture, and hear the milkmaids singing and the milk whizzing into the pail, as you looked at them.

And then those perfectly lovely sausages—I beg the reader's pardon! I forgot that the very mention of the word smacks of vulgarity. Yet, all the same, I venture to think that a secret taste for sausages among the upper classes is more widespread than we have any idea of. I confess that Beauty and her poet were at first ashamed of admitting their vulgar frailty to each other. They needed to know each other very well first. Yet there is nothing, when once confessed, that brings two people so close as—a taste for sausages!

"You darling!" exclaimed Beauty with something like tears in her voice, when her poet first admitted this touch of nature—and then next moment they were in fits of laughter that a common taste for a very "low" food should bring tears to their eyes! But such are the vagaries of love—as you will know, if you know anything about it—"vulgar," no doubt, though only the vulgar would so describe them—for it is only vulgarity that is always "refined"!

Then

Then there was the florist's to visit. What beautiful trades some people ply! To sell flowers is surely like dealing in fairies. Beautiful must grow the hands that wire them, and sweet the flower-girl's every thought.

There remained but the wine-merchant's, or, had we not better say at once, the grocer's, for our lovers could afford no rarer vintages than Tintara or the golden burgundy of Australia; and it is wonderful to think what a sense of festivity those portly colonial flagons lent to their little dining-table. Sometimes, I may confide, when they wanted to feel very dissipated, and were *very* rich, they would allow themselves a small bottle of Benedictine—and you should have seen Beauty's eyes as she luxuriously sipped at her green little liqueur glass, for, like most innocent people, she enjoyed to the full the delight of feeling occasionally wicked. However, these were rare occasions, and this night was not one of them.

Half a pound of black grapes completed their shopping, and then, with their arms full of their purchases, they made their way home again, the two happiest people in what is, after all, a not unhappy world.

Then came the cooking and the laying of the table. For all her Leonardo face, Beauty was a great cook—like all good women, she was as earthly in some respects as she was heavenly in others, which I hold to be a wise combination—and, indeed, both were excellent cooks; and the poet was unrivalled at "washing up," which, I may say, is the only skeleton at these Bohemian feasts.

You should have seen the gusto with which Beauty pricked those sausages—I had better explain to the un-Bohemian reader that to attempt to cook a sausage without first pricking it vigorously with a fork, to allow for the expansion of its juicy

 gases,

gases, is like trying to smoke a cigar without first cutting off the end—and O, to hear again their merry song as they writhed in torment in the hissing pan, like Christian martyrs raising hymns of praise from the very core of Smithfield fires.

Meanwhile, the poet would be surpassing himself in the setting-out of the little table, cutting up the bread reverently as though it were for an altar—as indeed it was—studying the effect of the dish of tomatoes now at this corner, now at that, arranging the flowers with even more care than he arranged the adjectives in his sonnets, and making ever so sumptuous an effect with that half-a-pound of grapes.

And then at last the little feast would begin, with a long grace of eyes meeting and hands clasping ; true eyes that said "how good it is to behold you, to be awake together in this dream of life" ; true hands that said "I will hold you fast for ever—not death even shall pluck you from my hand, shall loose this bond of you and me" ; true eyes, true hands, that had immortal meanings far beyond the speech of mortal words.

And it had all come out of that dull history of socialism, and had cost little more than a crown ! What lovely things can be made out of money ! Strange to think that a little silver coin of no possible use or beauty in itself can be exchanged for so much tangible beautiful pleasure. A piece of money is like a piece of opium, for in it lie locked up the most wonderful dreams—if you have only the brains and hearts to dream them.

When at last the little feast grew near its end, Love and Beauty would smoke their cigarettes together ; and it was a favourite trick of theirs to lower the lamp a moment, so that they might see the stars rush down upon them through the skylight which hung above their table. It gave them a sense of great sentinels, far away out in the lonely universe, standing guard over them, that

that seemed to say their love was safe in the tender keeping of great forces. They were poor, but then they had the stars and the flowers and the great poets for their servants and friends—and, best of all, they had each other. Do you call that being poor?

And then, in the corner, stood that magical box with the ivory keys, whose strings waited ready night and day—strange media through which the myriad voices, the inner-sweet thoughts, of the great world-soul found speech, messengers of the stars to the heart, and of the heart to the stars.

Beauty's songs were very simple. She got little practice, for her poet only cared to have her sing over and over again the same sweet songs; and perhaps if you had heard her sing "Ask nothing more of me, sweet," or "Darby and Joan," you would have understood his indifference to variety.

At last the little feast is quite, quite finished. Beauty has gone home; her lover still carries her face in his heart as she waved and waved and waved to him from the rattling lighted tramcar; long he sits and sits thinking of her, gazing up at those lonely ancient stars; the air is still bright with her presence, sweet with her thoughts, warm with her kisses, and as he turns to the shut piano, he can still see her white hands on the keys and her girlish face raised in an ecstasy—Beata Beatrix—above the music.

"O love, my love! if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring—
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?"

And

And then he would throw himself upon his bed, and burst into tears.

* * * * * *

"And they are gone: ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm."

That seventh-story heaven once more leads a dull life as the office of a ship-chandler, and harsh voices grate the air where Beauty sang. The books and the flowers and the lovers' faces are gone for ever. I suppose the stars are the same, and perhaps they sometimes look down through that roof-window, and wonder what has become of those two lovers who used to look up at them so fearlessly long ago.

But friends of mine who believe in God say that He has given His angels charge concerning that dingy old seventh-floor heaven, and that, for those who have eyes to see, there is no place where a great dream has been dreamed that is not thus watched over by the guardian angels of memory.

For M. Le G., a Birthday Present;
25 September, 1895.

The House Desolate

By Rosamund Marriott Watson

So still the old house lies, so dull, so grey,
The dews of dawn forget to hallow it ;
Here come no sweet birds singing, night or day,
From these bare eaves no building swallows flit.

Sunk in dim dreams it lies as in a swoon—
Dreams of a distant city hid from sight,
The enchanted city of the sun and moon,
The golden market of the world's delight.

Pale as the dead are they that dwell herein,
Worn with vain strife and wrung with vain regret ;
Theirs but to watch the world go by to win
That glimmering goal their hearts remember yet.

They lean among the lilacs by the door,
To watch the winding road with wistful eyes,
The long, white, dusty way that nevermore
Shall bear them hope or wonder or surprise.

Sometimes

Sometimes they call, but answer comes there none ;
 Sometimes they beckon—none will turn aside.
The long procession glitters in the sun ;
 With echoing tramp the motley pilgrims ride.

Some in the twilight chambers, wide and low,
 Around a cold hearth gather, murmuring
Vague, half-remembered tales of long ago,
 Songs, half forgot, of Travel and the Spring.

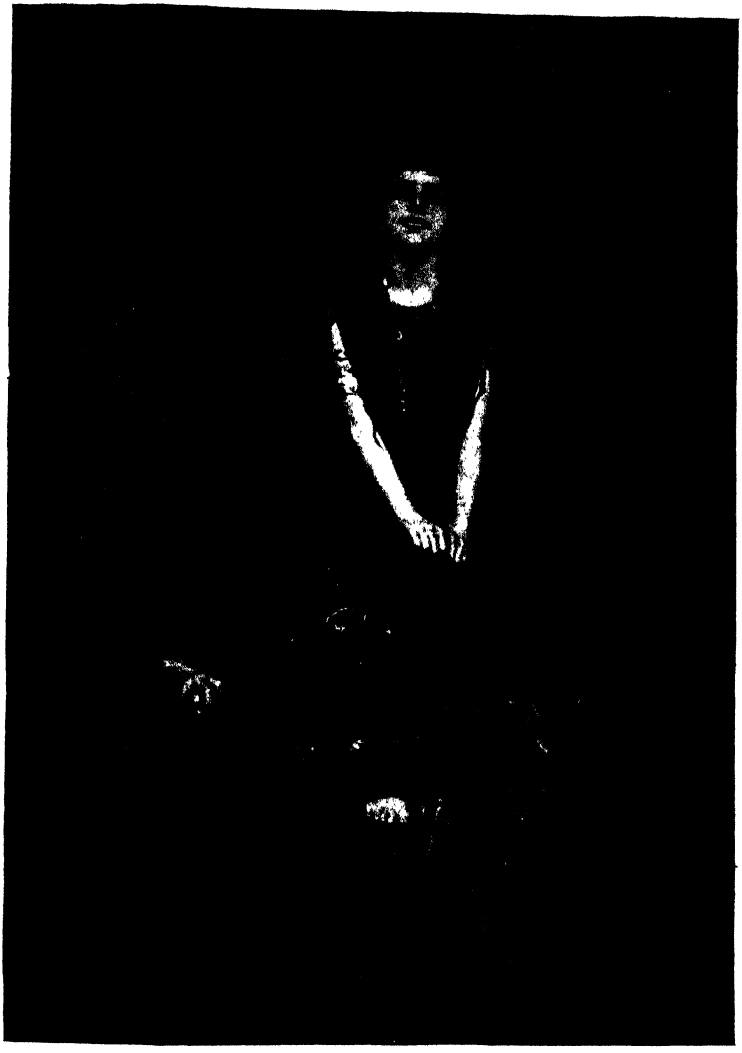
Wan faces peer from the uncurtained pane,
 Across the weedy garden, fain to see,
The wayfarers that pass in sun or rain,
 The blue, far-shining stream that threads the lea.

* * * * *

Here falls no word from any passer-by,
 None lifts the latch of this forgotten gate ;
Only faint winds about the lintel sigh
 "Your house is left unto you desolate."

Merlin and Vivien

By Henry R. Rheam



The Queen's Pleasure

By Henry Harland

I AM writing to you from a lost corner of the far south-east of Europe. The author of my guide-book, in his preface, observes that a traveller in this part of the world, "unless he has some acquaintance with the local idioms, is liable to find himself a good deal bewildered about the names of places." On Thursday of last week I booked from Charing Cross, by way of Dover, Paris, and the Oriental Express, for Vescova, the capital of Monterosso; and yesterday afternoon—having changed on Sunday, at Belgrade, from land to water, and steamed for close upon forty-eight hours down the Danube—I was put ashore at the town of Bckob, in the Principality of Tchermnogoria.

I certainly might well have found myself a good deal bewildered; and if I did not—for I'm afraid I can't boast of much acquaintance with the local idioms—it was no doubt because this isn't my first visit to the country. I was here some years ago, and then I learned that Bckob is pronounced as nearly as may be Vscov, and that Tchermnogoria is Monterosso literally translated—*tchermnoe* (the dictionaries certify) meaning red, and *gora*, or *goria*, a hill, a mountain.

It is our fashion in England to speak of Monterosso, if we speak

speak of it at all, as I have just done: we say the Principality of Monterosso. But if we were to enquire at the Foreign Office, I think they would tell us that our fashion of speaking is not strictly correct. In its own Constitution Monterosso describes itself as a *Basilestvo*, and its Sovereign as the *Basile*; and in all treaties and diplomatic correspondence, *Basile* and *Basilestvo* are recognised by those most authoritative lexicographers, the Powers, as equivalent respectively to King and Kingdom. Anyhow, call it what you will, Monterosso is geographically the smallest, though politically the eldest, of the lower Danubian States. (It is sometimes, by the bye, mentioned in the newspapers of Western Europe as one of the Balkan States, which can scarcely be accurate, since, as a glance at the map will show, the nearest spurs of the Balkan Mountains are a good hundred miles distant from its southern frontier.) Its area is under ten thousand square miles, but its reigning family, the Pavelovitches, have contrived to hold their throne, from generation to generation, through thick and thin, ever since Peter the Great set them on it, at the conclusion of his war with the Turks, in 1713.

Vescova is rarely visited by English folk, lying, as it does, something like a two days' journey off the beaten track, which leads through Belgrade and Sofia, to Constantinople. But, should you ever chance to come here, you would be surprised to see what a fine town it is, with its population of upwards of a hundred thousand souls, its broad, well-paved streets, its substantial yellow-stone houses, its three theatres, its innumerable churches, its shops and cafés, its gardens, quays, monuments, its government offices, and its Royal Palace. I am speaking, of course, of the new town, the modern town, which has virtually sprung into existence since 1850, and which, the author of my guide-book says, "disputes with Bukharest the title of the Paris of the South-East."

The

The old town—the Turkish town, as they call it—is another matter: a nightmare-region of filthy alleys, open sewers, crumbling clay hovels, mud, stench, dogs, and dirty humanity, into which a well-advised foreigner will penetrate as seldom as convenient. Yet it is in the centre of the old town that the Cathedral stands, the Cathedral of Sankt Iakov, an interesting specimen of Fifteenth Century Saracenic, having been erected by the Sultan Mohammed II, as a mosque.

Of the Royal Palace I obtain a capital view from the window of my room in the Hôtel de Russie.

"A vast irregular pile," in the language of my guide-book, "it is built on the summit of an eminence which dominates the town from the West." The "eminence" rises gradually from this side to a height of perhaps a hundred feet, but breaks off abruptly on the other in a sheer cliff overhanging the Danube. The older portions of the Palace spring from the very brink of the precipice, so that, leaning from their ramparts, you could drop a pebble straight into the current, an appalling depth below. And, still to speak by the book, these older portions "vie with the Cathedral in architectural interest." What I see from my bedroom is a formidable, murderous-looking Saracenic castle: huge perpendicular quadrangles of blank, windowless, iron-grey stone wall (*curtains*, are they technically called?), connecting massive square towers; and the towers are surmounted by battlements and pierced by meurtrières. It stands out very bold and black, gloomy and impressive, when the sun sets behind it, in the late afternoon. I could suppose the place quite impregnable, if not inaccessible; and it's a mystery to me how Peter the Great ever succeeded in taking it, as History will have it that he did, by assault.

The

The modern portions of the Palace are entirely commonplace and cheerful. The east wing, visible from where I am seated writing, might have been designed by Baron Haussmann: a long stretch of yellow façade—dazzling to the sight just now, in the morning sunshine—with a French roof, of slate, and a box of gay-tinted flowers in each of its countless windows.

Behind the Palace there is a large and very lovely garden, reserved to the uses of the Royal Household; and beyond that, the Dunayskiy Prospekt, a park that covers about sixty acres, and is open to the public.

The first floor, the *piano nobile*, of that east wing is occupied by the private apartments of the King and Queen.

I look across the quarter-mile of red-tiled housetops that separate me from their Majesties' habitation, and I fancy the life that is going on within. It is too early in the day for either of them to be abroad, so they are certainly there, somewhere behind those gleaming windows: Theodore *Basile*, and Anéli *Basilitsa*.

She, I would lay a wager, is in her music-room, at her piano, practising a song with Florimond. She is dressed in white (I always think of her as dressed in white—doubtless because she wore a white frock the first time I saw her), and her brown hair is curling loose about her forehead, her maids not having yet imprisoned it. I declare, I can almost hear her voice: *tra-la-lira-la-la:* mastering a trill; while Florimond, pink, and plump, and smiling, walks up and down the room, nodding his head to mark the time, and every now and then interrupting her with a suggestion.

The King, at this hour, will be in his study, in dressing-gown and slippers—a tattered old dingy brown dressing-gown, out at elbows

elbows — at his big, wildly-littered writing-table, producing "copy," to the accompaniment of endless cigarettes and endless glasses of tea. (Monterossan cigarettes are excellent, and Monterossan tea is always served in glasses.) The King has literary aspirations, and—like Frederick the Great—coaxes his muse in French. You will occasionally see a *conte* of his in the *Nouvelle Revue*, signed by the artful pseudonym, Théodore Montrouge.

At one o'clock to-day I am to present myself at the Palace, and to be received by their Majesties in informal audience; and then I am to have the honour of lunching with them. If I were on the point of lunching with any other royal family in Europe. . . . But, thank goodness, I'm not; and I needn't pursue the distressing speculation. Queen Anéli and King Théodore are—for a multitude of reasons—a Queen and King apart.

You see, when he began life, Théodore IV was simply Prince Théodore Pavelovitch, the younger son of a nephew of the reigning Basile, Paul III; and nobody dimly dreamed that he would ever ascend the throne. So he went to Paris, and "made his studies" in the Latin Quarter, like any commoner.

In those days—as, I dare say, it still is in these—the Latin Quarter was crowded with students from the far south-east. Servians, Roumanians, Monterossans, grew, as it were, on every bush; we even had a sprinkling of Bulgarians and Montenegrins; and those of them who were not (more or less vaguely) princes, you could have numbered on your fingers. And, anyhow, in that democratic and self-sufficient seat of learning, titles count for little, and foreign countries are a matter of consummate ignorance and jaunty unconcern. The Duke of Plaza-Toro, should he venture in the classical Boul' Miche, would have to cede the

pas to the latest hero of the Beaux-Arts, or bully from the School of Medicine, even though the hero were the son of a village apothecary, and the bully reeked to heaven of absinthe and tobacco; while the Prime Minister of England would find his name, it is more than to be feared, unknown, and himself regarded as a person of quite extraordinary unimportance.

So we accepted Prince Theodore Pavelovitch, and tried him by his individual merits, for all the world as if he were made of the same flesh and blood as Tom, Dick, and Harry; and thee-and-thou'd him, and hailed him as *mon vieux*, as merrily as we did everybody else. Indeed, I shouldn't wonder if the majority of those who knew him were serenely unaware that his origin was royal (he would have been the last to apprise them of it), and roughly classed him with our other *princes valaques*. For convenience sake, we lumped them all—the divers natives of the lands between the Black Sea and the Adriatic—under the generic name, Valaques; we couldn't be bothered with nicer ethnological distinctions.

We tried Prince Theodore by his individual merits; but, as his individual merits happened to be signal, we liked him very much. He hadn't a trace of "side;" his pockets were full of money; he was exceedingly free-handed. No man was readier for a lark, none more inventive or untiring in the prosecution of one. He was a brilliant scholar, besides, and almost the best fencer in the Quarter. And he was pleasantly good-looking—fair-haired, blue-eyed, with a friendly humorous face, a pointed beard, and a slight, agile, graceful figure. Everybody liked him, and everybody was sorry when he had to leave us, and return to his ultramundane birthplace. "It can't be helped," he said. "I must go home and do three years of military service. But then I shall come back. I mean always to live in Paris."

That

That was in '82. But he never came back. For, before his three years of military service were completed, the half-dozen cousins and the brother who stood between him and the throne, had one by one died off, and Theodore himself had succeeded to the dignity of *Basilitch*,—as they call their Heir Presumptive. In 1886 he married. And, finally, in '88, his great-uncle Paul also died—at the age of ninety-seven, if you please—and Theodore was duly proclaimed Basile.

He didn't forget his ancient cronies, though; and I was only one of those whom he invited to come and stay with him in his Palace. I came, and staid eleven months! That seems egregious; but what will you say of another of us, Arthur Fleet (or Florimond, as their Majesties have nicknamed him), who came at the same time, and has staid ever since? The fact is, the King is a tenacious as well as a delightful host; if he once gets you within his portals, he won't let you go without a struggle. "We do bore ourselves so improbably out here, you know," he explains. "The society of a Christian is a thing we'd commit a crime for."

Theodore's consort, Anéli Isabella, *Basilitsa Tchermnogory*—*vide* the *Almanach de Gotha*—is the third daughter of the late Prince Maximilian of Wittenburg; sister, therefore, to that young Prince Waldemar who comes almost every year to England, and with whose name and exploits as a yachtsman all conscientious students of the daily press will be familiar; and cousin to the reigning Grand Duke Ernest.

Theoretically German, she is, however, to all intents and purposes, French; for her mother, the Princess Célestine (of Bourbon-Morbihan), was a Frenchwoman, and, until her marriage, I fancy that more than half of Anéli's life was passed between Nice

Nice and Paris. She openly avows, moreover, that she "detests Germany, the German language, the German people, and all things German, and adores France and the French." And her political sympathies are entirely with the Franco-Russ alliance.

She is a deliciously pretty little lady, with curling soft-brown hair, a round, very young-looking face, a delicate rose-and-ivory complexion, and big, bright, innocent brown eyes—innocent, yet with plenty of potential archness, even potential mischief, lurking in them. She has beautiful full red lips, besides, and exquisite little white teeth. Florimond wrote a triolet about her once, in which he described her as "une fleur en porcelaine." Her Majesty repudiated the phrase indignantly. "Why not say a wax-doll, and be done with it?" she demanded. All the same, "fleur en porcelaine" does, in a manner, suggest the general effect of her appearance, its daintiness, its finish, its crisp chiselling, its clear, pure colour. Whereas, nothing could be more misleading than "wax-doll," for there is character, character, in every molecule of her person.

The Queen's character, indeed, is what I wish I could give some idea of. It is peculiar, it is distinctive; to me, at any rate, it is infinitely interesting and diverting; but, by the same token—if I may hazard so to qualify it—it is a trifle a trifle difficult.

"You're such an arbitrary gent!" I heard Florimond complain to her, one day. (I heard and trembled, but the Queen only laughed.) And that will give you an inkling of what I mean.

If she likes you, if you amuse her, and if you never remotely oppose or question her desire of the moment, she can be all that is most gracious, most reasonable, most captivating: an inspiring listener, an entertaining talker: mingling the naïveté, the inexperience

perience of evil, the half comical, half appealing unsophistication, of a girl, of a child almost—of one who has always lived far aloof from the struggle and uncleanness of the workaday world—with the wit, the humour, the swift appreciation and responsiveness of an exceedingly impressionable, clear-sighted, and accomplished woman.

But but

Well, I suppose, the right way of putting it would be to say, in the consecrated formula, that she has the defects of her qualities. Having preserved something of a child's simplicity, she has not entirely lost a child's wilfulness, a child's instability of mood, a child's trick of wearing its heart upon its sleeve. She has never perfectly acquired a grown person's power of controlling or concealing her emotions.

If you *don't* happen to amuse her—if, by any chance, it is your misfortune to *bore* her, no matter how slightly; and, oh, she is so easily bored!—the atmosphere changes in a twinkling: the sun disappears, clouds gather, the temperature falls, and (unless you speedily "brisken up," or fly her presence) you may prepare for most uncomfortable weather. If you manifest the faintest hesitation in complying with her momentary wishes, if you raise the mildest objection to them—*gare à vous!* Her face darkens, ominous lightning flashes in her eyes, her under-lip swells dangerously; she very likely stamps her foot imperiously; and you are to be accounted lucky if you don't get a smart dab from the barbed end of her royal tongue. And if she doesn't like you, though she may think she is trying with might and main to disguise the fact and to treat you courteously, you know it directly, and you go away with the persuasion that she has been, not merely cold and abstracted, but downright uncivil.

In a word, Queen Anéli is hasty, she is impatient. And, in addition to that, she is uncertain. You can never tell beforehand, by any theory of probabilities based on past experience, what will or will not, on any given occasion, cause her to smile or frown. The thing she expressed a desire for yesterday, may offend her to-day. The suggestion that put her in a temper yesterday, to-day she may welcome with joyous enthusiasm. You must approach her gingerly, tentatively; you must feel your ground.

"Oh, most dread Sovereign," said Florimond, "if you won't fly out at me, I would submit, humbly, that you'd better not drive this afternoon in your open carriage, in your sweet new frock, for, unless all signs fail, it's going to rain like everything."

She didn't fly out at him exactly; but she retorted, succinctly, with a peremptory gesture, "No, it's *not* going to rain," as who should say, "It daren't." And she drove in her open carriage, and spoiled her sweet new frock. "Not to speak of my sweet new top-hat," sighs Florimond, who attended her; "the only Lincoln and Bennett top-hat in the whole length and breadth of Monterosso."

She is hasty, she is uncertain; and then she is *intense*. She talks in italics, she feels in superlatives; she admits no comparative degree, no emotional half-tones. When she is not *ecstatically* happy, she is *desperately* miserable; wonders why she was ever born into this worst of all possible worlds; wishes she were dead; and even sometimes drops dark hints of meditated suicide. When she is not in the brightest of affable humours, she is in the blackest of cross ones. She either *loves* a thing, or she *simply can't endure it*;—the thing may be a town, a musical composition, a perfume, or a person. She either loves you, or she simply can't endure you; and she's very apt to love you and to cease to love you

you alternately—or, at least, to give you to understand as much—three or four times a day. It is winter midnight or summer noon, a climate of extremes.

"Do you like the smell of tangerine-skin?"

Every evening for a week, when, at the end of dinner, the fruit was handed round, the King asked her that question; and she, never suspecting his malice, answered invariably, as she crushed a bit between her fingers, and fervidly inhaled its odour, "Oh, do I *like* it? I *adore* it. It's perfect *rapture*."

She is hasty, she is uncertain, she is intense. Will you be surprised when I go on to insist that, down deep, she is altogether well-meaning and excessively tender-hearted, and when I own that among all the women I know I can think of none other who seems to me so attractive, so fascinating, so sweetly feminine and loveable? (Oh, no, I am not *in love* with her, not in the least—though I don't say that I mightn't be, if I were a king, or she were not a queen.) If she realises that she has been unreasonable, she is the first to confess it; she repents honestly, and makes the devoutest resolutions to amend. If she discovers that she has hurt anybody's feelings, her conscience will not give her a single second of peace, until she has sought her victim out and heaped him with benefits. If she believes that this or that distasteful task forms in very truth a part of her duty, she will go to any length of persevering self-sacrifice to accomplish it. She has a hundred generous and kindly impulses, where she has one that is perverse or inconsiderate. Bring any case of distress or sorrow to her notice, and see how instantly her eyes soften, how eager she is to be of help. And in her affections, however mercurial she may appear on the surface, she is really constant, passionate, and, in great things, forbearing. She and her husband, for example, though

though they have been married for perilously near ten years, are little better than a pair of sweethearts (and jealous sweethearts, at that; you should have been present on a certain evening when we had been having a long talk and laugh over old days in the Latin Quarter, and an evil spirit prompted one of us to regale her Majesty with a highly-coloured account of Theodore's youthful infatuation for Nina Childe! Oh, their faces! Oh, the silence!); and then, witness her devotion to her brother, to her sisters; her fondness for Florimond, for Madame Donarowska, who was her governess when she was a girl, and now lives with her in the Palace.

"I am writing a fairy-tale," Florimond said to her, "about Princess Gugglegoo and Princess Ragglesnag."

"Oh?" questioned the Queen. "And who were *they?*"

"Princess Gugglegoo was all sweetness and pinkness, softness and guilelessness, a rose full of honey, and without a thorn; a perfect little cherub; oh, such a duck! Princess Ragglesnag was all corners and sharp edges, fire and fret, dark moods and quick angers; oh, such an intolerant, dictatorial, explosive, tempestuous princess! You could no more touch her than you could touch a nettle, or a porcupine, or a live coal, or a Leyden jar, or any other prickly, snaggy, knaggy, incandescent, electric thing. You *did* have to mind your p's and q's with her! But no matter how carefully you minded them, she was sure to let you have it, sooner or later; you were sure to *rile* her, one way or another: she was that cantankerous and tetchy, and changeable and unexpected.—And then. Well, what do you suppose?"

"I'm waiting to hear," the Queen replied, a little drily.

"Oh, there! If you're going to be grumpy, I won't play," cried Florimond.

"I'm

"I'm not grumpy—as you call it. Only, your characters are rather conventionally drawn. However, go on, go on."

"There was a distinct suggestion of menace in your tone. But never mind. If you didn't really mean it, we'll pretend there wasn't.—Well, my dears," he went on, turning, so as to include the King in his audience, "you never *will* believe me, but it's a solemn, sober fact that these two princesses were twin sisters, and that they looked so much alike that nobody, not even their own born mother, could tell them apart. Now, wasn't *that* surprising? Only, Ragglesnag looked like Gugglegoo suddenly curdled and gone sour, you know; and Gugglegoo looked like Ragglesnag suddenly wreathed out in smiles and graces. So that the courtiers used to say, 'Hello! What *can* have happened? Here comes dear Princess Gugglegoo looking as black as thunder.' Or else—'Bless us and save us! What's *this* miracle? Here comes old Ragglesnag looking as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth.'—Well, and then."

"Oh, you needn't continue," the Queen interrupted, bridling. "You're tedious and obvious, and utterly unfair and unjust. I hope I'm not an insipid little fool, like Gugglegoo; but I don't think I'm quite a termagant, either, like your horrid exaggerated Ragglesnag."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" wailed Florimond. "Why *will* people go and make a personal application of everything a fellow says? If I had been even remotely thinking of your Majesty, I should never have dreamed of calling her by either of those ridiculous outlandish names. Gugglegoo and Ragglesnag, indeed!"

"What *would* you have called her?" the King asked, who was chuckling inscrutably, in his arm-chair.

"Well, I *might* have called her Ragglegoo, and I *might* have called

called her Gugglesnag. But I hope I'm much too discerning ever to have applied such a sweeping generalisation to her as Ragglesnag, or such a silly, sugary sort of barbarism as Gugglegoo."

"It's perfectly useless," the Queen broke out, bitterly, "to expect a *man*—even a comparatively intelligent and highly-developed man, like Florimond—to understand the subtleties of a woman's nature, or to sympathise with the difficulties of her life. When she isn't as crude, and as blunt, and as phlegmatic, and as insensitive, and as transparent and commonplace and all-of-one-piece, as themselves, men always think a woman's unreasonable and capricious and infantile. It's a little *too* discouraging. Here I wear myself to a shadow, and bore and worry myself to extermination, with all the petty contemptible cares and bothers and pomps and ceremonies of this tiresome little Court; and that's all the thanks I get—to be laughed at by my husband, and lectured and ridiculed in stupid allegories by Florimond! It's a little *too* hard. Oh, if you'd only let me go away, and leave it all behind me! I'd go to Paris, and change my name, and become a concert-singer. It's the only thing I really care for—to sing and sing and sing. Oh, if I could only go and make a career, as a concert-singer in Paris! Will you let me? Will you? *Will* you?" she demanded vehemently of her husband.

"That's rather a radical measure to bring up for discussion at this hour of the night, isn't it?" the King suggested, laughing.

"But it's quite serious enough for you to afford to consider it. And I don't see why one hour isn't as good as another. *Will* you let me go to Paris and become a concert-singer?"

"What! And leave poor me alone and forlorn here in Vescova? Oh, my dear, you wouldn't desert your own lawful spouse in that regardless manner!"

"I don't

"I don't see what 'lawful' has to do with it. You don't half appreciate me. You think I'm childish, and capricious, and bad-tempered, and everything that's absurd and idiotic. I don't see why I should waste my life and my youth, stagnating in this out-of-the-way corner of Nowhere, with a man who doesn't appreciate me, and who thinks I'm childish and idiotic, when I could go to Paris, and have a life of my own, and a career, and do the only thing in the world I really care for. Will you let me? Answer. Will you?"

But the King only laughed.

"And besides," the Queen went on, in a minute, "if you really missed me, you could come too. You could abdicate. Why shouldn't you? Instead of staying here, and boring and worrying ourselves to death as King and Queen of this ungrateful, insufferable, little unimportant ninth-rate country, why shouldn't we abdicate, and go to Paris, and be a Man and a Woman, and have a little Life, instead of this dreary, artificial, cardboard sort of puppet-show existence? You could devote yourself to literature, and I'd go on the concert-stage, and we'd have a delightful little house in the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, and be perfectly happy. Of course Florimond would come with us. Why shouldn't we? Oh, if you only would! Will you? Will you, Theo?" she pleaded earnestly.

The King looked at his watch. "It's nearly midnight, my dear," he said. "High time, I should think, to adjourn the debate. But if, when you wake up to-morrow morning, you wish to resume it, Florimond and I will be at your disposal. Meanwhile we're losing our beauty-sleep; and I, for one, am going to bed."

"Oh, it's always like that!" the Queen complained. "You never do me the honour of taking seriously anything I say. It's intolerable. I don't think any woman was ever so badly treated."

She

She didn't recur to the subject next day, however, but passed the entire morning with Florimond, planning the details of a garden-party, and editing the list of guests ; and she threw her whole soul into it, too : so that, when the King looked in upon them, a little before luncheon, Florimond smiled at him significantly (indeed, I'm not sure he didn't *wink* at him) and called out, "Oh, we *are* enjoying of ourselves. Please don't interrupt. Go back to your counting-house and count out your money, and leave us in the parlour to eat our bread and honey."

It is in the nature of things, doubtless, that a temperament such as I have endeavoured to suggest, should find the intensity of its own feelings reflected by those that it excites in others. One would expect to hear that the people who like Queen Anéli like her tremendously, and that the people who don't like her tremendously don't like her at all. And, in effect, that is precisely the lady's case. She is tremendously liked by those who are near to her, and who are therefore in a position to understand her and to make allowances. They love the woman in her ; they laugh at and love the high-spirited, whimsical, impetuous, ingenuous child. But those who are at a distance from her, or who meet her only rarely and formally, necessarily fail to understand her, and are apt, accordingly, neither to admire her greatly, nor to bear her much good will. And, of course, while the people who are near to her can be named by twos and threes, those who view her from a distance must be reckoned with by thousands. And this brings me to a painful circumstance, which I may as well mention without more ado. At Vescova—as you could scarcely spend a day in the town, and not become aware—Queen Anéli is anything you please but popular.

"The inhabitants of Monterosso," says M. Boridov, in his interesting

interesting history of that country, "fall into three rigidly separated castes: the nobility, a bare handful of tall, fair-haired, pure-blooded Slavs; the merchants and manufacturers, almost exclusively Jews and Germans; and the peasantry, the populace—a short, thick-set, swarthy race, of Slavic origin, no doubt, and speaking a Slavic tongue, but with most of the Slavic characteristics obliterated by admixture with the Turk. . . . Your true Slav peasant, with his mild blue eyes, and his trustful spirit, is as meek and as long-suffering as a dumb beast of burden. But your black-browed Monterossan, your Tchermnogorets, is fierce, lawless, resentful, and vindictive, a Turk's grandson, the Turk's first cousin: though no one detests the Turk more cordially than he."

Well, at Vescova, and, with diminishing force, throughout all Monterosso, Queen Aneli is entirely misunderstood and sullenly disliked. Her husband cannot be called precisely the idol of his people, either; but he is regarded with indulgence, even with hopefulness; he is a Monterossan, a Pavelovitch: he may turn out well yet. Aneli, on the contrary, is an alien, a German, a *Niemkashka*. The feeling against her begins with the nobility. Save the half-dozen who are about her person, almost every mother's son or daughter of them fancies that he or she has been rudely treated by her, and quite frankly hates her. I am afraid, indeed, they have some real cause of grievance; for they are most of them rather tedious, and provincial, and narrow-minded; and they bore her terribly when they come to Court; and when she is bored, as we have seen, she is likely to show it pretty plainly. So they say she gives herself airs. They pretend that when she isn't absent-minded and monosyllabic, she is positively snappish. They denounce her as vain, shallow-pated, and extravagant. They twist and torture every word she speaks, and everything she does, into subject-matter for unfriendly criticism; and they quote

as

as from her lips a good many words that she has never spoken, and they blame her savagely for innumerable things that she has never thought of doing. But that's the trouble with the fierce light that beats upon a throne—it shows the gaping multitude so much more than is really there. Why, I have been assured by at least *a score of Monterossan ladies that the Queen's lovely brown hair is a wig; that her exquisite little teeth are the creation of Dr.* Evans, of Paris; that whenever anything happens to annoy her, she bursts out with torrents of the most awful French oaths; that she quite frequently slaps and pinches her maids-of-honour; and that, as for her poor husband, he gets his hair pulled and his face scratched as often as he and she have the slightest difference of opinion. Monterossan ladies have gravely asseverated these charges to me (these, and others more outrageous, that I won't repeat), whilst their Monterossan lords nodded confirmation. It matters little that the charges are preposterous. Give a Queen a bad name, and nine people in ten will believe she merits it.

Anyhow, the nobility of Monterosso, quite frankly hating Queen Anéli, give her every bad name they can discover in their vocabularies; and the populace, the mob, without stopping to make original investigations, have convicted her on faith, and watch her with sullen captiousness and mislike. When she drives abroad, scarcely a hat is doffed, never a cheer is raised. On the contrary, one sometimes hears mutterings and muffled groans; and the glances the passers-by direct at her are, in the main, the very reverse of affectionate glances. Members of the shop-keeping class alone show a certain tendency to speak up for her, because she spends her money pretty freely; but the shop-keeping class are aliens too, and don't count—or, rather, they count against her, "the dogs of Jews," the *zhudovskwy sobakwy!*

But do you imagine Queen Anéli minds? Do you imagine she

is hurt, depressed, disappointed? Not she. She accepts her unpopularity with the most superb indifference. "What do you suppose I care for the opinion of such riff-raff?" I recollect her once crying out, with curling lip. "Anyone who has the least individuality, the least character, the least fineness, the least *originality—any one who is in the least degree natural, unconventional, spontaneous—is bound to be misconceived and* calumniated by the vulgar rank and file. It's the meanness and stupidity of average human nature; it's the proverbial injustice of men. To be popular, you must either be utterly insignificant, a complete nonentity, or else a time-server and a hypocrite. So long as I have a clear conscience of my own, I don't care a button what strangers think and say about me. I don't intend to allow my conduct to be influenced in the tiniest particular by the prejudices of outsiders. Meddlers, busybodies! I will live my own life, and those who don't like it may do their worst. I will be myself."

"Yes, my dear; but after all," the King reminded her, "one has, in this imperfect world, to make certain compromises with one's environment, for comfort's sake. One puts on extra clothing in winter, for example, however much, on abstract principles, one may despise such a gross, material, unintelligent thing as the weather. Just so, don't you think, one is by way of having a smoother time of it, in the long run, if one takes a few simple measures to conciliate the people amongst whom one is compelled to live? Now, for instance, if you would give an hour or two every day to learning Monterossan. . . ."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, don't begin *that* rengaîne," cried her Majesty. "I've told you a hundred million times that I won't be bothered learning Monterossan."

It is one of her subjects' sorest points, by the bye, that she has never

never condescended to learn their language. When she was first married, indeed, she announced her intention of studying it. Grammars and dictionaries were bought; a Professor was nominated; and for almost a week the Crown Princess (Basilevna), as she then was, did little else than grind at Monterossan. Her Professor was delighted; he had never known such a zealous pupil. Her husband was a little anxious. "You musn't work too hard, my dear. An hour or two a day should be quite enough." But she answered, "Let me alone. It interests me." And for almost a week she was at it early and late, with hammer and tongs; poring over the endless declensions of Monterossan nouns, the endless conjugations of Monterossan verbs; wrestling, *sotto voce*, with the tongue-tangling difficulties of Monterossan pronunciation; or, with dishevelled hair and inky fingers, copying long Monterossan sentences into her exercise book. She is not the sort of person who does things by halves.—And then, suddenly, she turned volte-face; abandoned the enterprise forever. "It's idiotic," she exclaimed. "A language with thirty-seven letters in its alphabet, and no literature! Why should I addle my brains trying to learn it? Ah, bien, merci! I'll content myself with French and English. It's bad enough, in one short life, to have had to learn German, when I was a child."

And neither argument nor entreaty could induce her to recommence it. The King, who has never altogether resigned himself to her determination, seizes from time to time an opportunity to hark back to it; but then he is silenced, as we have seen, with a "don't begin *that* rengaîne." The disadvantages that result from her ignorance, it must be noticed, are chiefly moral; it offends Monterossan amour-propre. Practically, she does perfectly well with French, that being the Court language of the realm.

No, Queen Anéli doesn't care a button. She tosses her head, and

and accepts "the proverbial injustice of men" with magnificent unconcern. Only, sometimes, when the public sentiment against her takes the form of aggressive disrespect, or when it interferes in any way with her immediate convenience, it puts her a little out of patience—when, for instance, the traffic in the street retards the progress of her carriage, and a passage isn't cleared for her as rapidly as it might be for a Queen whom the rabble loved; or when, crossing the pavement on foot, to enter a church, or a shop, or what not, the idlers that collect to look, glare at her sulkily, without doing her the common courtesy of lifting their hats. In such circumstances, I dare say, she is more or less angered. At all events, a sudden fire will kindle in her eyes, a sudden colour in her cheeks; she will very likely tap nervously with her foot, and murmur something about "canaille." Perhaps anger, though, is the wrong word for her emotion; perhaps it should be more correctly called a kind of angry contempt.

When I first came to Vescova, some years ago, the Prime Minister and virtual dictator of the country was still M. Tsargradev, the terrible M. Tsargradev,—or Sargradeff, as most English newspapers write his name,—and it was during my visit here that his downfall occurred, his downfall and irretrievable disgrace.

The character and career of M. Tsargradev would furnish the subject for an extremely interesting study. The illegitimate son of a Monterossan nobleman, by a peasant mother, he inherited the unprepossessing physical peculiarities of his mother's stock: the sallow skin, the broad face, the flat features, the prominent cheek-bones, the narrow, oblique-set, truculent black eyes, the squat, heavy figure. But to these he united a cleverness, an energy, an ambition, which are as foreign to simple as to gentle Monterossan blood,

blood, and which he doubtless owed to the fusion of the two ; and an unscrupulousness, a perfidy, a cruelty, and yet a surperficial urbanity, that are perhaps not surprising in an ambitious politician, half an Oriental, who has got to carry the double handicap of a repulsive personal appearance and a bastard birth. Now, the Government of Monterosso, as the King has sometimes been heard to stigmatise it, is deplorably constitutional. By the Constitution of 1869, practically the whole legislative power is vested in the Soviete, a parliament elected by the votes of all male subjects who have completed three years of military service. And, in the early days of the reign of Theodore IV, M. Tsargradev was leader of the Soviete, with a majority of three to one at his back.

This redoubtable personage stood foremost in the ranks of those whom our fiery little Queen Anéli "could not endure."

"His horrible soapy smile ! His servile, insinuating manner ! It makes you feel as if he were plotting your assassination," she declared. "His voice—ugh ! It's exactly like lukewarm oil. He makes my flesh creep, like some frightful, bloated reptile."

"There was a Queen in Thule," hummed Florimond, "who had a marvellous command of invective. 'Eaving help your reputation, if you fell under her illustrious displeasure."

"I don't see why you make fun of me. I'm sure you think as I do—that he's a monster of low cunning, and cynicism, and craft, and treachery, and everything that's vile and revolting. Don't you ? " the Queen demanded.

"To be sure I do. I think he's a bold, bad, dreadful person. I lie awake half the night, counting up his iniquities in my mind. And if just now I laughed, it was only to keep from crying."

"This sort of talk is all very well," put in the King ; "but the fact remains that Tsargradev is the master of Monterosso. He could

could do any one of us an evil turn at any moment. He could cut down our Civil List to-morrów, or even send us packing, and establish a republic. We're dependent for everything upon his pleasure. I think, really, my dear, you ought to try to be decent to him—if only for prudence' sake."

"Decent to him!" echoed her Majesty. "I like that! As if I didn't treat him a hundred million times better than he deserves! I hope he can't complain that I'm not decent to him."

"You're not exactly effusive, do you think? I don't mean that you stick your tongue out at him, or throw things at his head. But trust him for understanding. It's what you leave unsaid and undone, rather than what you say or do. He's fully conscious of the sort of place he occupies in your heart, and he resents it. He thinks you distrust him, suspect him, look down upon him. . . ."

"Well, and so I do," interrupted the Queen. "And so do you. And so does everybody who has any right feeling."

"Yes; but those of us who are wise in our generation keep our private sentiments regarding him under lock and key. We remember his power, and treat him respectfully to his face, however much we may despise him in secret. What's the use of quarrelling with our bread and butter? We should seek to propitiate him, to rub him the right way."

"Then you would actually like me to *grovel*, to *toady*, to a disgusting little low-born, black-hearted cad like Tsargradev!" cried the Queen, with scorn.

"Oh, dear me, no," protested her husband. "But there's a vast difference between toadying, and being a little tactful, a little diplomatic. I should like you to treat him with something more than bare civility."

"Well,

"Well, what can I do that I don't do?"

"You never ask him to any but your general public functions, your state receptions, and that sort of thing. Why don't you admit him to your private circle sometimes? Why don't you invite him to your private parties, your dinners?"

"Ah, merci, non! My private parties are my private parties. I ask my friends, I ask the people I like. Nothing could induce me to ask that horrid little underbred mongrel creature. He'd be—he'd be like—like something unclean—something murky and contaminating—in the room. He'd be like an animal, an ape, a satyr."

"Well, my dear," the King submitted meekly, "I only hope we'll never have cause to repent your exclusion of him. I know he bears us a grudge for it, and he's not a person whose grudges are to be made light of."

"Bah! I'm not afraid of him," Anéli retorted. "I know he hates me. I see it every time he looks at me, with his snaky little eyes, his forced little smile—that awful, complacent, ingratiating smirk of his, that shows his teeth, and isn't even skin deep; a mere film spread over his face, like pomatum! Oh, I know he hates me. But it's the nature of mean, false little beasts like him to hate their betters; so it can't be helped. For the rest, he may do his worst. I'm not afraid," she concluded airily.

Not only would she take no steps to propitiate M. Tsargradev, but she was constantly urging her husband to dismiss him.

"I'm perfectly certain he has all sorts of dreadful secret vices. I haven't the least doubt he's murdered people. I'm sure he steals. I'm sure he has a secret understanding with Berlin, and accepts bribes to manage the affairs of Monterosso as Prince Bismarck wishes. That's why we're more or less in disgrace with our natural

natural allies, Russia and France. Because Tsargradev is paid to pursue an anti-Russian, a German, policy. If you would take my advice, you'd dismiss him, and have him put in prison. Then you could explain to the Soviete that he is a murderer, a thief, a traitor, and a monster of secret immorality, and appoint a decent person in his place."

Her husband laughed with great amusement.

"You don't appear quite yet to have mastered the principles of constitutional government, my dear. I could no more dismiss Tsargradev than you could dismiss the Pope of Rome."

"Are you or are you not the King of Monterosso?"

"I'm Vice-King, perhaps. You're the King, you know. But that has nothing to do with it. Tsargradev is leader of the Soviete. The Soviete pays the bills, and its leader governs. The King's a mere fifth-wheel. Some day they'll abolish him. Meanwhile they tolerate him, on the understanding that he's not to interfere."

"You ought to be ashamed to say so. You ought to take the law and the Constitution and everything into your own hands. If you asserted yourself, they'd never dare to resist you. But you always submit—submit—submit. Of course, everybody takes advantage of a man who always submits. Show that you have some spirit, some sense of your own dignity. Order Tsargradev's dismissal and arrest. You can do it now, at once, this evening. Then to-morrow you can go down to the Soviete, and tell them what a scoundrel he is—a thief, a murderer, a traitor, an impostor, a libertine, everything that's foul and bad. And tell them that henceforward you're going to be really King, and not merely nominally King; and that you're going to govern exactly as you think best; and that, if they don't like that, they will have to make the best of it. If they resist, you can dissolve them, and

order a general election. Or you can suspend the Constitution, and govern without any Soviete at all."

The King laughed again.

"I'm afraid the Soviete might ask for a little evidence, a few proofs, in support of my sweeping charges. I could hardly satisfy them by declaring that I had my wife's word for it. But, seriously, you exaggerate. Tsargradev is anything you like from the point of view of abstract ethics, but he's not a criminal. He hasn't the faintest motive for doing anything that isn't in accordance with the law. He's simply a vulgar, self-seeking politician, with a touch of the Tartar. But he's not a thief, and I imagine his private life is no worse than most men's."

"Wait, wait, only wait!" cried the Queen. "Time will show. Some day he'll come to grief, and then you'll see that he's even worse than I have said. I *feel*, I *know*, he's everything that's bad. Trust a woman's intuitions. They're much better than what you call *evidence*."

And she had a nickname for him, which, as well as her general criticisms of his character, had pretty certainly reached the Premier's ear; for, as subsequent events demonstrated, very nearly every servant in the Palace was a spy in his pay. She called him the *nain jaune*.

Subsequent events have also demonstrated that her woman's intuitions were indeed trustworthy. Perhaps you will remember the revelations that were made at the time of M. Tsargradev's downfall; fairly full reports of them appeared in the London papers. Murder, peculation, and revolting secret debaucheries were all, surely enough, proved against him. It was proved that he was the paid agent of Berlin; it was proved that he had had recourse to *torture* in dealing with certain refractory witnesses in his famous prosecution of Count Osaréki. And then, there was the

the case of Colonel Alexandrevitch. He and Tsargradev, at sunset, were strolling arm-in-arm in the Dunayskiy Prospekt, when the Colonel was shot by some person concealed in the shrubberies, who was never captured. Tsargradev and his friends broached the theory, which gained pretty general acceptance, that the shot had been intended for the Prime Minister himself, and that the death of Colonel Alexandrevitch was an accident due to bad aiming. It is now perfectly well established that the death of the Colonel was due to very good aiming indeed; that the assassin was M. Tsargradev's own hireling; and that perhaps the best reason why the police could never lay hands on him had some connection with the circumstance that the poor wretch, that very night, was strangled and cast into the Danube.

Oh, they manage these things in a highly unlikely and theatrical manner, in the far south-east of Europe!

But the particular circumstances of M. Tsargradev's downfall were amusingly illustrative of the character of the Queen. *Ce que femme veult, Dieu le veult.* And though her husband talked of the Constitution, and pleaded the necessity of evidence, Aneli was unconvinced. To get rid of Tsargradev, by one method or another, was her fixed idea, her determined purpose; she bided her time, and in the end she accomplished it.

It befell, during the seventh month of my stay in the Palace, that a certain great royal wedding was appointed to be celebrated at Dresden: a festivity to which were bidden all the crowned heads and most of the royal and semi-royal personages of Christendom, and amongst them the Basile and Basilitsa of Monterosso.

"It will cost us a pretty sum of money," Theodore grumbled, when

when the summons first reached him. "We'll have to travel in state, with a full suite ; and the whole shot must be paid from our private purse. There's no expecting a penny for such a purpose from the Soviete."

"I hope," exclaimed the Queen, looking up from a letter she was writing, "I hope you don't for a moment intend to go ? "

"We *must* go," answered the King. "There's no getting out of it."

"Nonsense ! " said she. "We'll send a representative."

"I only wish we could," sighed the King. "But unfortunately this is an occasion when etiquette requires that we should attend in person."

"Oh, bother etiquette," said she. "Etiquette was made for slaves. We'll send your Cousin Peter. One must find some use for one's Cousin Peters."

"Yes ; but this is a business, alas, in which one's Cousin Peter won't go down. I'm very sorry to say we'll have to attend in person."

"Nonsense ! " she repeated. "Attend in person ! How can you think of such a thing ? We'd be bored and fatigued to death. It will be unspeakable. Nothing but dull, stodgy, suffocating German pomposity and bad taste. Oh, je m'y connais ! Red cloth, and military bands, and interminable banquets, and noise, and confusion, and speeches (oh, the speeches !), until you're ready to drop. And besides, we'd be herded with a crowd of ninth-rate princelings and petty dukes, who smell of beer and cabbage and brilliantine. We'd be relegated to the fifth or sixth rank, behind people who are all of them really our inferiors. Do you suppose I mean to let myself be patronised by a lot of stupid Hohenzollerns and Grätzhoffens ? No, indeed ! You can send your cousin Peter."

"Ah,

"Ah, my dear, if I were the Tsar of Russia!" laughed her husband. "Then I could send a present and a poor relation, and all would be well. But—you speak of ninth-rate princelings. A ninth-rate princeling like the Basile of Tchermnogoria must make act of presence in his proper skin. It's *de rigueur*. There's no getting out of it. We must go."

"Well, *you* may go, if you like," her Majesty declared. "As for me, I *won't*. If *you* choose to go and be patronised and bored, and half killed by the fatigue, and half ruined by the expense, I suppose I can't prevent you. But, if you want my opinion, I think it's utter insane folly."

And she re-absorbed herself in her letter, with the air of one who had been distracted for a moment by a frivolous and tiresome interruption.

The King did not press the matter that evening, but the next morning he mustered his courage, and returned to it.

"My dear," he began, "I beg you to listen to me patiently for a moment, and not get angry. What I wish to say is really very important."

"Well, what is it? What is it?" she inquired, with anticipatory weariness.

"It's about going to Dresden. I—I want to assure you that I dislike the notion of going quite as much as you can. But it's no question of choice. There are certain things one has to do, whether one will or not. I'm exceedingly sorry to have to insist, but we positively must reconcile ourselves to the sacrifice, and attend the wedding—both of us. It's a necessity of our position. If we should stay away, it would be a breach of international good manners that people would never forgive us. We should be the scandal, the by-word, of the Courts of Europe. We'd give the direst offence in twenty different quarters. We really can't afford

afford to make enemies of half the royal families of the civilised world. You can't imagine the unpleasantnesses, the complications, our absence would store up for us; the bad blood it would cause. We'd be put in the black list of our order, and snubbed, and embarrassed, and practically ostracised, for years to come. And you know whether we need friends. But the case is so obvious, it seems a waste of breath to argue it. You surely won't let a mere little matter of temporary personal inconvenience get us into such an ocean of hot water. Come now—be reasonable, and say you will go."

The Queen's eyes were burning; her under-lip had swollen portentously; but she did not speak.

The King waited a moment. Then, "Come, Anéli—don't be angry. Answer me. Say that you will go," he urged, taking her hand.

She snatched her hand away. I'm afraid she stamped her foot. "No!" she cried. "Let me alone. I tell you I *won't*."

"But, my dear" the King was re-commencing

"No, no, no! And you needn't call me your dear. If you had the least love for me, the least common kindness, or consideration for my health or comfort or happiness, you'd never dream of proposing such a thing. To drag me half-way across the Continent of Europe, to be all but killed at the end of the journey by a pack of horrid, coarse, beer-drinking Germans! And tired out, and irritated, and patronised, and humiliated by people like —— and ——! It's perfectly heartless of you. And I—when I suggest such a simple natural pleasure as a trip to Paris, or to the Italian lakes in autumn—you go and tell me we can't afford it! You're ready to spend thousands on a stupid, utterly unnecessary and futile absurdity, like this wedding, but you can't afford to take me to the Italian lakes! And yet you pretend to love me! Oh,

it's

it's awful, awful, awful!" And her voice failed her in a sob; and she hid her face in her hands, and wept. So the King had to drop the subject again, and to devote his talents to the task of drying her tears.

I don't know how many times they renewed the discussion, but I do know that the Queen stood firm in her original refusal, and that at last it was decided that the King should go without her, and excuse her absence as best he might on the plea of her precarious state of health. It was only after this resolution was made and registered, and her husband had brought himself to accept it with some degree of resignation—it was only then that her Majesty began to waver and vacillate, and reconsider, and change her mind. As the date approached for his departure, her alternations became an affair of hours. It was, "Oh, after all, I can't let you go alone, poor Theo. And besides, I should die of heart-break, here without you. So—there—I'll make the best of a bad business, and go with you"—it was either that, or else, "No, after all, I *can't*. I really can't. I'm awfully sorry. I shall miss you horribly. But, when I think of what it *means*, I haven't the strength or courage. I simply can't"—it was one thing or the other, on and off, all day.

"When you finally know your own mind, I shall be glad if you'll send for me," said Theodore. "Because I've got to name a Regent. And if you're coming with me, I shall name my uncle Stephen. But if you're stopping here, of course I shall name you."

There is a bothersome little provision in the Constitution of Monterosso to the effect that the Sovereign may not cross the frontiers of his dominions, no matter for how brief a sojourn, without leaving a Regent in command. Under the good old régime, before the revolution of 1868, the kings of Tchermnogoria

nogoria were a good deal inclined to spend the bulk of their time —and money—in foreign parts. They found Paris, Monte Carlo, St. Petersburg, Vienna, and even, if you can believe me, sometimes London, on the whole more agreeable as places of residence than their hereditary capital. (There was the particularly flagrant case of Paul II, our Theodore's great-grandfather, who lived for twenty years on end in Rome. He fancied himself a statuary, poor gentleman, and produced—oh, such amazing Groups! Tons of them repose in the Royal Museum at Vescova; a few brave the sky here and there in lost corners of the Campagna—he used to present them to the Pope! Perhaps you have seen his Fountain at Acqu'amarra?) It was to discourage this sort of royal absenteeism that the patriotic framers of the Constitution slyly slipped Sub-Clause 18 into Clause ii, of Title 3, of Article XXXVI: *Concerning the Appointment of a Regent.*

"So," said Theodore, "when you have finally made up your mind, I shall be glad if you will let me know; for I've got to name a Regent."

But the Queen continued to hesitate; in the morning it was Yes, in the evening No; and the eleventh hour was drawing near and nearer. The King was to leave on Monday. On the previous Tuesday, in a melting mood, Anéli had declared, "There! Once for all, to make an end of it, I'll go." On Wednesday a Commission of Regency, appointing Prince Stephen, was drawn up. On Thursday it was brought to the Palace for the royal signature. The King had actually got as far as the *d* in his name, when the Queen, faltering at sight of the irrevocable document, laid her hand on his arm. She was very pale, and her voice was weak. "No, Theo, don't sign it. It's like my death-warrant. I—I haven't got the courage. You'll have to let me stay. You'll have to go alone." On Friday a new commission

was prepared, in which Anéli's name had been substituted for Stephen's. On Saturday morning it was presented to the King. "Shall I sign?" he asked. "Yes, sign," said she. And he signed.

"Ouf!" she cried. "*That's* settled."

And she hardly once changed her mind again until Sunday night; and even then she only half changed it.

"If it weren't too late," she announced, "do you know, I believe I'd decide to go with you, in spite of everything? But of course I never could get ready to start by to-morrow morning. You couldn't wait till Tuesday?"

The King said he couldn't.

"And now, my dears" (as Florimond, who loves to tell the story, is wont to begin it), "no sooner was her poor confiding husband's back a-turned, than what do you suppose this deep, designing, unprincipled, high-handed young woman up and did?"

Almost the last words Theodore spoke to her were, "Do, for heaven's sake, try to get on pleasantly with Tsargradev. Don't treat him too much as if he were the dust under your feet. All you'll have to do is to sign your name at the end of the bills he'll bring you. Sign and ask no questions, and all will be well."

And the very first act of Anéli's Regency was to degrade M. Tsargardev from office and to place him under arrest.

We bade the King good-bye on the deck of the royal yacht *Nemisa*, which was to bear him to Belgrade, the first stage of his journey. Cannon bellowed from the citadel; the bells of all the churches in the town were clanging in jubilant discord; the river was gay with fluttering bunting, and the King resplendent in a gold-laced uniform, with the stars and crosses of I don't know how many

many Orders glittering on his breast. We lingered at the landing-stage, waving our pocket-handkerchiefs, till the *Nemisa* turned a promontory and disappeared ; Anéli silent, with a white face, and set, wistful eyes. And then we got into a great gilt-and-scarlet state-coach, she and Madame Donarowska, Florimond and I, and were driven back to the Palace ; and during the drive she never once spoke, but leaned her cheek on Madame Donarowska's shoulder, and cried as if her heart would break.

The Palace reached, however—as who should say, "We're not here to amuse ourselves"—she promptly dried her tears.

"Do you know what I'm going to do?" she asked. And, on our admitting that we didn't, she continued, blithely, "It's an ill wind that blows no good. Theo's absence will be very hard to bear, but I must turn it to some profitable account. I must improve the occasion to straighten out his affairs ; I must put his house in order. I'm going to give Monsieur Tsargradev a taste of retributive justice. I'm going to do what Theo himself ought to have done long ago. It's intolerable that a miscreant like Tsargradev should remain at large in a civilised country ; it's a disgrace to humanity that such a man should hold honourable office. I'm going to dismiss him and put him in prison. And I shall keep him there till a thorough investigation has been made of his official acts, and the crimes I'm perfectly certain he's committed have been proved against him. I'm not going to be Regent for nothing. I'm going to *rule*."

We, her auditors, looked at each other in consternation. It was a good minute before either of us could collect himself sufficiently to speak.

At last, "Oh, lady, lady, august and gracious lady," groaned Florimond, "please be nice, and relieve our minds by confessing that you're only saying it to tease us. Tell us you're only joking."

"I never

"I never was more serious in my life," she answered.

"I defy you to look me in the eye and say so without laughing," he persisted. "What *is* the fun of trying to frighten us?"

"You needn't be frightened. I know what I'm about," said she.

"What you're about!" he echoed. "Oh me, oh my! You're about to bring your house crashing round your ears. You're about to precipitate a revolution. You'll lose your poor unfortunate husband's kingdom for him. You'll—goodness only can tell what you *won't* do. Your own bodily safety—your very life—will be in danger. There'll be mobs, there'll be rioting. Oh, lady, sweet lady, gentle lady, you mustn't, you really mustn't. You'd much better come and sing a song, along o' me. Don't meddle with politics. They're nothing but sea, sand, and folly. Music's the only serious thing in the world. Come—let's too-tootle."

"It's all very well to try to turn what I say to jest," the Queen replied loftily, "but I assure you I mean every word of it. I've studied the Constitution. I know my rights. The appointment and revocation of Ministers rest absolutely with the Sovereign. It's not a matter of law, it's merely a matter of custom, a matter of convenience, that the Ministers should be chosen from the party that has a majority in the Soviete. Well, when it comes to the case of a ruffian like Tsargradev, custom and convenience must go by the board, in favour of right and justice. I'm going to revoke him."

"And within an hour of your doing so the whole town of Vescova will be in revolt. We'll all have to leave the Palace, and fly for our precious skins. We'll be lucky if we get away with them intact. A pretty piece of business! Tsargradev, from being Grand Vizier, will become Grand Mogul; and farewell to the

the illustrious dynasty of Pavelovitch! Oh, lady, lady! I call it downright unfriendly, downright inhospitable of you. Where shall my grey hairs find shelter? I'm *so* comfortable here under your royal roof-tree. You wouldn't deprive the gentlest of God's creatures of a happy home? Better that a thousand Tsargradevs should flourish like a green bay tree, than that one upright man should be turned out of comfortable quarters. There, now, be kind. As a personal favour to me, won't you please just leave things as they are?"

The Queen laughed a little—not very heartily, though, and not at all acquiescently. "Monsieur Tsargradev must go to prison," was her inexorable word.

We pleaded, we argued, we exhausted ourselves in warnings and protestations, but to no purpose. And in the end she lost her patience, and shut us up categorically.

"No! Let me be!" she cried. "I've heard enough. I know my own mind. I won't be bothered."

It was with heavy spirits and the dismallest forebodings that we assisted at her subsequent proceedings. We had an anxious time of it for many days; and it has never ceased to be a source of astonishment to me that it all turned out as well as it did. But—*ce que femme veult, le diable ne sçaurait pas l'empêcher.*

She began operations by despatching an aide-de-camp to M. Tsargradev's house, with a note in which she commanded him to wait upon her forthwith at the Palace, and to deliver up his seals of office.

At the same time she summoned to her presence General Michaïlov, the Military Governor of Vescova, and Prince Vasiliev, the leader of the scant Conservative opposition in the Soviete.

She

She awaited these gentlemen in the throne-room, surrounded by the officers of the household in full uniform. Florimond and I hovered uneasily in the background.

"By Jove, she does look her part, doesn't she?" Florimond whispered to me.

She wore a robe of black silk, with the yellow ribbon of the Lion of Monterosso across her breast, and a tiara of diamonds in her hair. Her eyes glowed with a fire of determination, and her cheeks with a colour that those who knew her recognised for a danger-signal. She stood on the steps of the throne, waiting, and tapping nervously with her foot.

And then the great white-and-gold folding doors were thrown open, and M. Tsargradev entered, followed by the aide-de-camp who had gone to fetch him.

He entered, bowing and smiling, grotesque in his ministerial green and silver; and the top of his bald head shone as if it had been waxed and polished. Bowing and smirking, he advanced to the foot of the throne, where he halted.

"I have sent for you to demand the return of your seals of office," said the Queen. She held her head high, and spoke slowly, with superb haughtiness.

Tsargradev bowed low, and, always smiling, answered, in a voice of honey, "If it please your Majesty, I don't think I quite understand."

"I have sent for you to demand the return of your seals of office," the Queen repeated, her head higher, her inflection haughtier than ever.

"Does your Majesty mean that I am to consider myself dismissed from her service?" he asked, with undiminished sweetness.

"It is my desire that you should deliver up your seals of office," said she.

Tsargradev's

Tsargradev's lips puckered in an effort to suppress a little good-humoured deprecatory laugh. "But, your Majesty," he protested, in the tone of one reasoning with a wayward school-girl, "you must surely know that you have no power to dismiss a constitutional Minister."

"I must decline to hold any discussion with you. I must insist upon the immediate surrender of your seals of office."

"I must remind your Majesty that I am the representative of the majority of the Soviete."

"I forbid you to answer me. I forbid you to speak in my presence. You are not here to speak. You are here to restore the seals of your office to your Sovereign."

"That, your Majesty, I must, with all respect, decline to do."

"You refuse?" the Queen demanded, with terrific shortness.

"I cannot admit your Majesty's right to demand such a thing of me. It is unconstitutional."

"In other words, you refuse to obey my commands? Colonel Karkov!" she called.

Her eyes were burning magnificently now; her hands trembled a little.

Colonel Karkov, the Marshal of the Palace, stepped forward.

"Arrest that man," said the Queen, pointing to Tsargradev.

Colonel Karkov looked doubtful, hesitant.

"Do you also mean to disobey me?" the Queen cried, with a glance oh, a glance!

Colonel Karkov turned pale, but he hesitated no longer. He bowed to Tsargradev. "I must ask you to constitute yourself my prisoner," he said.

Tsargradev made a motion as if to speak; but the Queen raised her hand, and he was silent.

"Take

"Take him away at once," she said. "Lock him up. He is to be absolutely prevented from holding any communication with any one outside the Palace."

And, somehow, Colonel Karkov managed to lead Tsargradev from the presence-chamber.

And that ended the first act of our comical, precarious little melodrama.

After Tsargradev's departure there was a sudden buzz of conversation among the courtiers. The Queen sank back, in evident exhaustion, upon the red velvet cushions of the throne. She closed her eyes and breathed deeply, holding one of her hands pressed hard against her heart.

By-and-bye she looked up. She was very pale.

"Now let General Michaïlov and Prince Vasiliev be introduced," she said.

And when they stood before her, "General Michaïlov," she began, "I desire you to place the town of Vescova under martial law. You will station troops about the Palace, about the Chamber of the Soviete, about the Mint and Government offices, and in all open squares and other places where crowds would be likely to collect. I have just dismissed M. Tsargradev from office, and there may be some disturbance. You will rigorously suppress every sign of disorder. I shall hold you responsible for the peace of the town and the protection of my person."

General Michaïlov, a short, stout, purple-faced old soldier, blinked and coughed, and was presumably on the point of offering something in the nature of an objection.

"You have heard my wishes," said the Queen. "I shall be glad if you will see to their immediate execution."

The General still seemed to have something on his mind.

The

The Queen stamped her foot. "Is everybody in a conspiracy to disobey me?" she demanded. "I am the representative of your King, who is Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Are my orders to be questioned?"

The General bowed, and backed from the room.

"Prince Vasiliev," the Queen said, "I have sent for you to ask you to replace M. Tsargradev as Secretary of State for the Interior, and President of the Council. You will at once enter into the discharge of your duties, and proceed to the formation of a Ministry."

Prince Vasiliev was a tall, spare, faded old man, with a pointed face ending in a white imperial. He was a great personal favourite of the Queen's.

"It will be a little difficult," said he.

"No doubt," assented she. "But it must be done."

"I hardly see how I can form a Ministry to any purpose, with an overwhelming majority against me in the Soviete."

"You are to dissolve the Soviete and order a general election."

"The general election can scarcely be expected to result in a change of parties."

"No; but we shall have gained time. When the new deputies are ready to take their seats, M. Tsargradev's case will have been disposed of. I expect you will find among his papers at the Home Office evidence sufficient to convict him of all sorts of crimes. If I can deliver Monterosso from the Tsargradev superstition, my intention will have been accomplished."

"Now let's lunch," she said to Florimond and me, at the close of this historic session. "I'm ravenously hungry."

I dare say General Michaïlov did what he could, but his troops

troops weren't numerous enough to prevent a good deal of disturbance in the town; and I suppose he didn't want to come to bloodshed. For three days and nights, the streets leading up to the Palace were black with a howling mob, kept from crossing the Palace courtyard by a guard of only about a hundred men. Cries of "Long live Tsargradev!" and "Death to the German woman!" and worse cries still, were constantly audible from the Palace windows.

"Canaille!" exclaimed the Queen. "Let them shout themselves hoarse. Time will show."

And she would step out upon her balcony, in full sight of the enemy, and look down upon them calmly, contemptuously.

Still, the military did contrive to prevent an actual revolution, and to maintain the *status quo.*

The news reached the King at Vienna. He turned straight round and hurried home.

"Oh, my dear, my dear!" he groaned. "You *have* made a mess of things."

"You think so? Read this."

It was a copy of the morning's Gazette, containing Prince Vasiliev's report of the interesting discoveries he had made amongst the papers Tsargradev had left behind him at the Home Office.

There was an immediate revulsion of public feeling. The secret understanding with Berlin was the thing that "did it." The Monterossans are hereditarily, temperamentally, and from motives of policy, Russophils. They couldn't forgive Tsargradev his secret treaty with Berlin; and they promptly proceeded to execrate him as much as they had loved him.

For State reasons, however, it was decided not to prosecute him. On his release from prison, he asked for his passport, that he might go abroad. He has remained an exile ever since, and (according to Florimond, at any rate) "is spending his declining years colouring a meerschaum."

"People talk of the ingratitude of princes," said the Queen, last night. "But what of the ingratitude of nations? The Monterossans hated me because I dismissed M. Tsargradev; and then, when they saw him revealed in his true colours, they still hated me, in spite of it. They are quick to resent what they imagine to be an injury; but they never recognise a benefit. Oh, the folly of universal suffrage! The folly of constitutional government! I used to say, 'Surely a good despot is better than a mob.' But now I'm convinced that a *bad* despot, even, is better. Come, Florimond, let us sing you know that song. . . ."

"God save—the best of despots?" suggested Florimond.

A Few Notes upon Mr. James

By Lena Milman

I

To think of form as characteristic of emptiness, as though all spheres were bubbles, is an æsthetic heresy bequeathed to us by the Puritans who, as surely as they added to our national muscle, bereft us of a certain sensibility of touch. In their eyes, art was a mere concession to the bauble-loving folly of the crowd, and beauty itself was anathema to the wise few unless it clothed some grave moral teaching, which could not otherwise be made acceptable to the foolish many. Bunyan could not help but deck his parable in the beautiful prose of his day, but he would have scorned to bespangle it consciously with jewels of diction, and he could only shudder if he realised that Mercy and Greatheart spoke the same idiom as the players of Vanity Fair.

The contempt for the short story prevalent in England, but unknown elsewhere, is surely as traceable to Puritan influence as the mutilation of the Mary Altar at Ely, and of the shrine of Saint Thomas; for, insisting, as it has become our English bent to do, upon some serious side-purpose in art, we are not content with a beautiful suggestion, with a sketch be it never so masterly; the narrative must illustrate a principle, the picture, a fact. It is

not

not yet ours to realise how the most exquisite in life are just those passing emotions, those elusive impressions which it behoves the artist to go seeking, over them so cunningly to cast his net of words or colour as to preserve the rapture of that emotion, that impression, for the delight of mankind for ever. We are too apt to regard the short story as the cartoon for a possible novel, whereas any elaboration of it is as thankless a process as the development of a fresco from an easel-painting. The treatment, the pigment, the medium, the palette are other from the very beginning. The rugged outline, which adds vigour to the fresco, could not be tolerated on canvas, the gem-like tones of the easel-painting would look blurred if transferred to the wall. Mr. James's pictures must be on the line; sky them, and it is not worth while to crane our necks for the modicum of pleasure they can afford. He has indeed written several books in the form of novels, but his method is too analytical, and we enjoy the stories much in the way we enjoy travelling over a picture with a microscope. We can detect no fault of technique; on the contrary, each movement of the glass reveals some new beauty, some wonder of skill; but we are conscious all the while that, as a whole, the work is a failure. The "American" is an example of this. The characterisation is masterly, the observation unerring, and yet Newman's passion carries no conviction with it, although the story treats of its dawn, its noon, its setting.

Distinction, of all qualities the one most rare in young writers, brought Mr. James's work instant recognition, and his personality was from the very first so clearly stamped upon his writing that it is nowhere more marked than in a story printed as early as 1871: "A Passionate Pilgrim." Not only does every page reveal him as "enamoured of literary form," (we quote from "The Middle Years,") but also as full of love, both for his own countrymen

countrymen and for England—a love none the less real because so undemonstrative that superficial observers describe him as cosmopolitan. In one so guiltless of Chauvinism as Mr. James, it is surely not a little charming to find how rarely the exigencies of narrative induce him to portray his own country-people in a light altogether unamiable. Her innocence, her untimely death, forbid us to think lightly even of that type of frivolity, Miss Annie P. Miller; and of all Mr. James's portraits of women, surely the most lovable is that of Euphemia Cleve, afterwards "Madame de Mauves." So great, indeed, is his love for England, his appreciation of things English, that he would fain persuade himself that it is shared by his countrymen in general:

"The latent preparedness of the American mind for even the most characteristic features of English life is a fact I never have got to the bottom of. The roots of it are so deeply buried in the soil of our early culture, that without some great upheaval of experience it would be hard to say when and where and how it begins. It makes an American's enjoyment of England an emotion more intimate, as the French say, than his enjoyment, for instance, of Italy or Spain."

With a delightful style, a facile invention, a wide culture, what writer could be better equipped than Mr. James?

Alas, that he must write for a generation upon whom two at least of these qualities are as though they were not! Alas, that it should be the concurrence of illiterate opinion, (an opinion often then most illiterate when most elegantly uttered,) that constitutes popularity! The select multitude that surges up Belgravian staircases, that larger one that spends its holidays among the bowers of Rosherville, agree in preferring "Claudian" to "Hamlet," Mr. Jerome's humour to Elia's, Mr. Ellis Roberts's adaptations to Mr. Watts' portraits. There are certain elementary emotions, there

there are certain melodramatic situations, of which they never tire; and a writer who prefers to tell of subtle emotions, of bloodless situations, whose reputation, moreover, does not chiefly rest upon one of those respectable monuments of British industry, novels in three volumes, will never see his works stacked high upon the bookstalls. If, like Mr. James, he is further hampered by a tender literary conscience, which makes him reverent and temperate in the use of words, which hinders him from writing even daintily of things foul, it will go even harder with him, since he cannot hope for a place on that index which has made so many reputations in the marring.

"*La qualité la plus rare chez la femme*," says Balzac, "*c'est une certaine gaieté qui n'altère point la tendresse*," and surely the rarity may be predicated of other than women, of whole communities indeed. To steer between the Scylla of flippancy on the one hand, and the Charybdis of sentimentality on the other, is given to but few. It is such a perfection of taste, as one would expect an ancient civilization to produce; and, lo! an example of it, a very apostle of form, comes to us over the Atlantic, beyond whose wave the forefathers of his race sought immunity from form, civil and religious.

II

It is as difficult to express the charm of an individual style in words other than the author's own as to convey that of music without a snatch of illustrative melody; and this is especially true of a style which, like that of Mr. James, expresses an exquisite sense of fitness rather than a musical ear. It is not that his epigram is ever discordant, but rather that his system of short, closed sentences does not lend itself to flowing cadence.

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He is the least self-conscious of writers, but surely when, in "The Middle Years," he describes Duncombe as "a passionate corrector, a fingerer of style," he lets slip an autobiographical detail; and, indeed, supposing all other sources of information to be closed to us, we might construct a tolerably correct biography of Mr. James from the evidence of his works. We might detect, for instance, his American birth and education in his idiom, his Celtic blood in his satire, his sympathy with English convention in his dainty morality, his intimate knowledge of French in his lapses of Gallicism.

With provincial France, indeed, where the poplars twinkle beside the white ways, he is as familiar as are but two of our English writers, Miss Thackeray and Mr. Wedmore; and with Paris too he is acquainted, not only in those her obvious aspects which opulent but illiterate youth can learn superficially in a week or so, but also as the Paris beyond Seine that lounges in the shade of the Luxembourg chestnut-trees, that saunters through the book-lined arcades of the Odéon, that hides its dignity in the bastion-like palaces of the Faubourg Saint Germain; the Paris that displays its wealth in the Parc Monceaux, that flaunts its poverty on the Buttes Chaumont.

Occasionally Mr. James's unremitting warfare against the Obvious, whether of epithet or of incident, has misled him into artificiality. He should remember that whereas the Obvious in life is always the most easily attainable, in art, convention has so fenced it round as to place it almost out of reach, and that sometimes startling effect is best produced by perfect simplicity of phrase. We cannot recall any passage in Mr James's stories as poignant as poor wandering Clifford's cry in the "House of the Seven Gables":

"I want my happiness! Many, many years have I waited for it!

it! It is late! it is late! I want my happiness." And yet Hawthorne worked within far narrower limits than does the author of "Washington Square."

Mr. James's descriptive passages are as vividly impressionist as his characters are subtly analytical, and it is perhaps for this reason that they best exhibit the charm of his style. It is no mere word-painting. This cant-phrase but ill expresses the magic of words able to convey not merely colour but the scent and sound and movement which, welded together, form one idea. Who that knows Paris will not testify to the accuracy of observation displayed in this description of a characteristic scene at the Comédie Française?

"The foyer was not crowded; only a dozen groups were scattered over the polished floor, several others having passed out to the balcony which overhangs the square of the Palais Royal. The windows were open, the brilliant lights of Paris made the dull summer evening look like an anniversary or a revolution; a murmur of voices seemed to come up from the streets, and even in the foyer one heard the slow click of the horses and the rumble of the crookedly-driven fiacres on the hard, smooth asphalt."

But Mr. James has another manner, of which the following is a sample. Surely Gautier himself never wrote more gracefully of travel:

"In so far as beauty of structure is beauty of line and curve, balance and harmony of masses and dimensions, I have seldom relished it as deeply as on the grassy nave of some crumbling church, before lonely columns and empty windows, where the wild flowers were a cornice and the sailing clouds a roof. The arts certainly have a common element. These hoary relics of Glastonbury reminded me in their broken eloquence of one of the other great ruins of the world—the Last Supper of Leonardo. A beautiful

beautiful shadow, in each case, is all that remains; but that shadow is the artist's thought."

III

In one of Mr. James's earlier stories we read of a young German who has heard of the population of the United States as being "a highly humorous people." The author may or may not concur in this opinion, but certainly his own vein of humour is as far removed as possible from that usually regarded as typically American, and it may be that, in crediting his countrymen with an exclusive appreciation for the exaggerated burlesque of their most popular writers, we do them the same injustice they do us who conceive of our being moved to mirth by that humour known as the "New."

Mr. James's humour is like Miss Austen's, in being so entirely a part of the texture that it is almost as difficult to detach an illustrative fragment as to cut a pattern from one of those fabrics which we are advised to "see in the piece." And, spite of what we have said of his being chiefly successful as a short-story writer, it is perhaps in one of his shorter novels, "Washington Square," that his humour is best exemplified. The character indeed of Aunt Penniman, always advising, but always ill-advised, is worthy a place beside the immortal aunts who watched over Maggie Tulliver and the thrifty Aunt Norris of "Mansfield Park." We read of Aunt Penniman that "Her manners were strange and formidable, and her mourning robes—she dressed in black for twenty years after her husband's death, and then suddenly appeared one morning with pink roses in her cap—were complicated in odd, unexpected places with buckles, bugles, and pins, which discouraged familiarity.

familiarity. She took children too hard both for good and evil, and had an oppressive air of expecting subtle things of them, so that going to see her was a good deal like being taken to church and made to sit in a front pew."

But Mrs. Penniman was as romantic as she was inaccurate ("it must be delightful," she said, "to think of those who love us among the ruins of the Pantheon"), and it needed but the attentions of an heiress-hunting young man to convert the poor little heroine of the story, weak at every point save her affections, unattractive, ungifted, into a heroine of romance in her aunt's eyes, the father's opposition only making the situation more dramatic, and—"Mrs. Penniman's real hope was that the girl would make a secret marriage, at which she should officiate as brideswoman or duenna. She had a vision of this ceremony being performed in some subterranean chapel—subterranean chapels in New York were not frequent, but Mrs. Penniman's imagination was not chilled by trifles—and of the guilty couple—she liked to think of poor Catherine and her suitor as the guilty couple—being shuffled away in a fast whirling vehicle to some obscure lodging in the suburbs, where she would pay them (in a thick veil) clandestine visits, where they would endure a period of romantic privation, and where ultimately, after she should have been their earthly providence, their intercessor, their advocate, and their medium of communication with the world, they should be reconciled to her brother in an artistic tableau, in which she herself should be, somehow, the central figure."

But apart from the context, deprived of the contrast afforded her by the matter-of-fact sincerity of her niece, the dry perspicuity of her brother, Aunt Penniman's figure cannot be made to stand as firmly as in the novel. Indeed, humour is so volatile a thing, the perception of it requires so delicate a sensibility, that the mood

cannot

cannot be maintained, except by that transition from grave to gay, from gay to grave, which is the whole art of the story-teller as of the dramatist.

The peculiar humour whose sparks are struck by the clash of nationalities in European hotels and *pensions* has surely never been so deftly distilled as in the "Bundle of Letters." Miss Miranda Hope, of Bangor, Maine, "decorated all over with beads and bracelets and embroidered dandelions," whose travelling "for general culture" obliges her to go to a Paris theatre unattended, and who there sees "plenty of other ladies alone (mostly French);" the æsthetic youth from Boston, who talks of a real "Corot Day," and who paints "for the knowledge that leaves a trace—that leaves strange scars and stains and reveries behind it;" the English girl who describes the landlady as "*exceedingly foreign*;" the landlady's cousin, who enjoys free board and lodging so long as he keeps "an eye on the grammatical eccentricities of the *pensionnaires*," are all equally typical, and yet none of them lack that touch which makes them human as well as humorous.

To sustain humour as long as he is in the mood, without once lapsing into caricature—this is what Mr. James has essayed to do, and has done admirably.

IV

There is another side to Mr. James's genius—a side of whose existence they never reck who are content to know him merely as the social satirist of "Daisy Miller" and "A Bundle of Letters"—a side which links him with his great compatriots Poe and Hawthorne—a way, namely, of setting his characters in an atmosphere of the supernatural with so admirable a skill as never by over-statement to impel the reader to scepticism. The little

story,

story, "Sir Edmund Orme," is an example of this. The ghost of Sir Edmund is invisible to all but two persons, and all that these two have in common is a great love for one woman—a love so great that, as we read, it seems almost natural that it should suffice to rarefy mortal sense and extend its range beyond things of matter. There is something, too, of this mystical element in "The Madonna of the Future," although here the question is not of the dead appearing, but of one whose gaze is so constantly fixed upon the ideal that the real becomes a shadow. It is the story of Don Quixote over again, but, in place of the knight, we have Theobald, the poor artist, in place of Dulcinea, his model Serafina, whose virtue, whose beauty is as imaginary as was that of her Spanish prototype. The scene is laid in the Florence of to-day—that Florence whose hotel windows look out upon Arno's bank, where Dante's gaze first lit upon Beatrice, where the shrine of Our Lady of the Flower is thronged by a cosmopolitan crowd who refuse her homage. And upon this background, mediæval in outline but modern in every detail, the little wan figure of the artist stands out, imaginary no doubt as an individual, but typical of how much pathos, of how much high endeavour! There are some to whom Quixote himself is merely a caricature; there are others to whom he recalls a singleness of aim, a tender sensibility, an undaunted courage which was once theirs. They are wiser now: they have seen how ridiculous is vain effort, how contemptible a figure he cuts who sets himself a task beyond his strength, and yet . . . But in this vein Mr. James has never done better than in the "Altar of the Dead." The many will never so much as read it—the many who can only read stories which they can imagine of the "people over the way;" but to the few who grieve when the Master is content to do merely well what he can do exquisitely, this last story comes as a pledge of yet further possibilities,

bilities, a promise of further progress towards perfection. It tells of one who "had entered that dark defile of our earthly descent in which some one dies every day"—one, the keynote of whose nature was constancy—one who could forgive all except betrayal. So, in the recesses of his heart, he reared an altar to the memory of "the Others," as he called the dead. For a time this sufficed, but one day he chanced to enter "a temple of the old persuasion," and the idea struck him of dedicating a material altar to those with whose memory he would some day link his own. So it came to be a great joy to him to see the faithful participating in his devotion for the Others, although none but he knew what souls they were in memory of whose mortal life the tapers burned, the flowers bloomed. Soon his altar boasted a devotee even more constant than himself—a woman came to kneel there whose devotion to the others was more absorbing than his. The altar grew more and more radiant as the founder's friends grew fewer; the woman still came to kneel there, and one day the founder learned that her thoughts were all of One, and that One the only friend of his who, proving false, had never been commemorated by flower or taper.

V

Again and again does Mr. James recur to the fatal effect of importunate society upon talent, an effect not always the less fatal when the claims of society are tempered by those of domesticity. Neil Paraday, "the Lion," is hustled to his grave by interviewers and ladies eager for prey as any Tartarin; Henry St. George, "the Master," squanders his talent by writing for money with which to meet his wife's housekeeping expenses and his boys' school-bills; Mark Ambient, "the author of 'Beltraffio,'"

traffio,'" lives to see his wife prefer their only child should die rather than live to read his father's works. This last story, by the way, is one of those in which the author has so far stepped aside to avoid the Obvious as to stray into the Abnormal. But be the stories what they may (and to our thinking two of them are among Mr. James's best), they have afforded the author so many incidental opportunities for self-revelation as to be exceptionally interesting to the student of his work. Listen for instance to Mark Ambient's address to his young disciple :

"Polishing one's plate—that is, the torment of execution, the effort to arrive at a surface—if you think a surface necessary—some people don't, happily for them ! My dear fellow, if you could see the surface I dream of—as compared with the one with which I have to content myself. Life is really too short for art—one hasn't time to make one's shell ideally hard. Firm and bright—firm and bright !—the devilish thing has a way sometimes of being bright without being firm there are horrible little flabby spots where I have taken the second-best word, because I couldn't for the life of me think of the best."

Flaubert lay awake, the guilt of a double genitive lying heavy upon his conscience. We can imagine Mr. James haunted by the fear of an epithet misplaced. For to this longing for perfection of form, there is also constant reference in "The Lesson of the Master." "The sense of having done the best," says St. George, "the sense which is the real life of the artist and the absence of which is his death, of having drawn from his intellectual instrument the finest music that nature had hidden in it, of having played it as it should be played."

"In every son of woman," says Mr. James, in one of his early stories, "there are two men—the practical man and the dreamer. We live for our dreams—but meanwhile we live by

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our wits. When the dreamer is a poet, the other fellow is an artist."

English restricts the title of poet to writers of verse, but what is poetry but a fusion of life with dream, of dream with life? And is not he who can supply the requisite heat a poet, be his emotion expressed in stone or chord, colour or spoken words?

"The thing is to have made somebody care," says Duncombe, in "The Middle Years." There are many on either side of the Atlantic to tell Mr. James that he has succeeded at least in this.

The Truce of the Bishop

By Harold Frederic

I

A PALLID and starved sunlight looked upon the shore-land, and mocked it, because, now, in the fall of the harvest, there was no yield of any kind for the blade, or any reaper to seek it. On all the four fair ploughlands of the lords of Dunbeekin, stretching along the smooth valley of the bay, and pushing inward over gently lifting slopes to the furze-lined granite barrier of Gabriel, no ditch stood unbroken: the fields lay naked and blackened by fire. The tall keep watched the deserted water with sightless eyes, through which the daylight shone from wall across to wall, and at its feet the crouching huts of its people were thatchless. It was the desolation of conquest. The conquered were dead, or in hiding among the hills. The spoilers, their havoc wrought, had turned and gone away, with famine spreading wave-like at their heels.

Far up on the flank of the mountain there fell the distant lowing boom of a bittern. Some cattle, lost in the waste of thicket at a further height, answered this call as if it came from their kind.

Three men, sprawled on their bellies in a grassy crevice between the

the boulders, had been peering downward upon the picture of ruin below. They glanced at one another now, with a flash of comprehension. A little wiser than their kine, they knew that the bittern cried only in the breeding spring-time, and this was the tenth month of the year. One of them echoed the sound, and when it was repeated, coming nearer, the three dragged themselves to their feet, and, stealing upward, stood forth on a ledge of rock in plain view. There climbed towards them presently another, a lean and agile man, whose bare legs brushed through the spikes of furze and heather as if they were cased in hide, and whose naked soles missed no footing on the stones as he bounded from boulder to crag.

He stood panting before them, and without speech turned to survey the prospect spread beneath, till his breath could be overtaken. Looking thus, his rover eye caught something the others had already seen—a small barque, with full sails limply hanging on the still air, down in the misty distance where the great sea ends and Dunmanus begins. He pointed to it, and nodded his head.

"It is to Turlogh, son of Fineen, I will be hastening now," he said, with abruptness. "Show me the way."

As the group turned, the foremost of them lifted his head and halted.

"It is Turlogh who comes to you," he said.

A few paces away, on the crown of the cliff, stood a man to whom all four bent their heads. He regarded them with an eye which asked them questions, yet shrank from hearing these if they were to be not to his mind; and they, knowing this well, held their peace, and looked about them at their ease.

The Lord of Dunbeekin was an old man now, tall and slender of frame, with much grey hair flowing upon his rounded shoulders. His apparel of quilted jacket and cloak and tunic falling to the

 mid-thigh,

mid-thigh, were of fine cloth, but stained and torn by exposure in these rude times that had befallen him. The face he bent upon his tribesmen was long and thin, and marked with many lines. They were skilled from years of use to see in this wrinkled countenance sometimes the cunning of a fox, sometimes the wistful enquiry of a puzzled child ; and they never feared him, and would always die for him, and understood when they heard men call him Turlogh of the Two Minds.

"I heard the bull of the bog," he said, giving the bittern its old name among the people. "It was good to the ears." His voice was grave and lingering.

Goron the messenger nodded again. He saw that Turlogh had noted the strange craft entering the bay, and waited for a little more to be questioned. Then he motioned to the others to leave him alone with his chief, and as they moved away he clambered up on the rock.

"O'Mahony, there will be no help coming at all," he said. "Young Donogh, son of Murtogh, will not stir from Dunlogher, for the reason that he is watching the O'Driscolls of the island, to take a prey of cattle from them at the change of the moon. The strong houses of Dunmanus and Ballydivlin and Leamcon are like Dunbeekin there, with the sunlight shining through their windows, and their people are dispersed and have no footing in their country."

"And Conogher of the Cross, in Ardintenant, the head of our sept, the venerable and holy man?" asked Turlogh, with a bitter little jest in his tone. "And Teige of Rosbrin, whom I saved from the MacCarthy, and from his own brother?"

Goron shook his head.

"The English lie between you and them. They will not be lifting their short finger for us."

"They

"They will be making peace with the English?" the chief demanded.

"They will be keeping their tongues behind their teeth," said the other briefly.

It was Turlogh's turn to nod comprehension.

"So it will be the end, then!" he said, musing aloud. "We have been true to God, and He will not restrain the hand of our heretic enemies. I have been all my days loyal to my family; I have withheld nothing in their service; I have made my Dunbeekin a tower of refuge for all my kinsmen when troubles assailed them, and when their own fathers and brothers sought their lives—and now you do be seeing their gratitude. You have it from me, Goron, son of Tiarnan, there is not in Heaven nor on earth any thankfulness for good deeds rendered."

Goron looked into his lord's sad old face and smiled. In stature and girth he might have been Turlogh's twin, but his garments were of the coarsest, and his skin was burnt and tanned by the life of a low-born man. His face, lean and pointed like the other's, was shrewd and bluntly single-minded. He stood well enough with his chief, these many years, to speak in freedom.

"I know only what I am told about Heaven," he replied, "but the earth I observe with my own eyes. Men will get nothing here but what they can take with their right arm. You have made no one afraid of you, Turlogh, son of Fineen. You have belonged to no man's party, and marched with him to spoil and waste all others. You speak the truth that your cousins found refuge in Dunbeekin from the wrath of their fathers. But it was true as well that these fathers would be coming next year to be protected from the fury of their sons. Your walls were a strong shelter for them both, in their day of need, but they left when it was safe to do so without thanks to you in their hearts. They have

have their own troubles now to weigh them down, but if they had not—then all the same you would not be seeing the colour of their blood. And, moreover—there are the books."

The old chief laughed—a mirthless and melancholy laugh.

"They have the right of it," he said, sighing. "They speak the true word—my father should have made a monk of me. I am not a fit master of my people. I have never desolated any man's country, or put out his eyes, or held him sleepless for a single night with terror of me. That is very bad for me. My cousins have only contempt for one who reads in books, and does not be riding out to sack some neighbour's castle, and drive his herds away. Their bards do well to make verses about my bloodless hands." He held out these hands, still unwithered by years, and white and shapely, and viewed them with a gloomy smile. "If they were stained red, my kinsmen would know me for a true O'Mahony—a true son of the People of the Bridge. What will you be thinking, Goron? It will be too late for me to begin now?"

Goron's eyes sparkled.

"If my counsel is asked," he said, promptly, "your people would leap for joy to have one good fight before they die."

Turlogh's face clouded with doubt.

"Poor souls. What would they be doing in a battle? I have made them a mock and a byeword in Carbery, Goron. I have taught them to till the land, and take fish from the sea, and make nets and build ditches; and these things they do very well. And if there were some of a warlike nature, with weapons to guard the bawns, all these my brother Donal has drawn with him to the army of the Earl. You yourself were of those who advised to quit Dunbeekin before the English came in sight, and bring hither the women and children and cattle into a place of safety. You spoke

no

no word of resistance when we lay here that night, and looked down, and saw the thatches flame up like torches, and the fire roll through the fields of corn. It was not in your mind to fight then. We saw the black forms of these English against the furnace they made of our corn and our roofs, and we were glad to be at this distance. And why should we be talking otherwise now?"

If his companion had some answer ready, Turlogh did not wait for it. A lifting breath of air had filled the sails of the strange vessel, and brought it along up the bay until now it hung in view close to the opposite shore of Muinteravoira. The sight raised new thoughts in the chief's mind.

"Will that be English, too?" he wondered, aloud.

Goron had forgotten this part of his tidings.

"It is a ship from some unknown land," he explained. "I hailed it from the rocks beyond Dunlogher at daybreak. It is a sort of holy miracle, O'Mahony. Our Lord Bishop is in that ship, coming all the way from his pilgrimage to the True Cross. Two years gone he is, and we not knowing if he was alive, and be returning to us with grand relics and a train of priests. 'Twas with one of them I spoke—a young man walking the deck and reading his prayers. I cried to the blackamoor at the helm to beware the sunken rocks at the headland, and waved my arms to force my meaning on him; but the priest had the Irish, and called out to me that it was God's ship, with a Bishop in it, and holy relics beside, and no harm could come to it or them. But he told the helmsman, none the less, and the ship's course was laid off."

Turlogh stared at him.

"Is it your meaning that *our* Bishop, Laurence Malmoon (*Luirint Maol-Mughain*), son of Ivar, will be in that ship?" he demanded.

"No

"No other," answered Goron.

"But what land will he be making?" pursued the chief, knitting his brows in perplexity as he watched the craft drifting inland. "There is no foothold for him in all Muinteravoira."

"'Tis not Muinteravoira, or any land of the Dalys or Sullivans, he will be touching. His Lordship will be coming to you. The priest gave me that word."

The Lord of Dunbeekin bent a stern, searching gaze upon his man.

"I will not think you have a trap laid for me, Goron *shuileach*," he said, gravely.

"You will not think it, O'Mahony," responded the other, with proud candour. "It would put too much shame upon you, and upon me also, to think that evil thought."

"I will ask your forgiveness," said Turlogh, hastily. "There is no sleep for me, here in the rocks, and I am very tired. Come with me now, to the place where my people are gathered."

The pale sunlight had lost itself before this in the veil of misty haze drawn over the sky above the line of the distant western peaks. The mountain-side lay in the shadowless, tranquil approaches of twilight; silent for a long time, save that from point to point, along its vast terraced expanse of cliffs and moorland, there rose at intervals the trumpeting of an ox-horn—flat, yet sonorous. Sounds of rustling through the heather and scrub-furze began to make themselves heard. Then came louder and more confident noises, the shouting of men above the rest.

The first stars, twinkling forth through the smoky residue of sunset, saw a long cavalcade descending by a tortuous broken path the rough face of Gabriel. They came on down through the growing darkness—bareheaded men, wild-faced and savage of attire, leading horses laden with household goods; boys and youths,

of

of unkempt, barbarous aspect, herding droves of swift-footed little black cattle along the narrow defiles ; tall women, wholly muffled from view in huge hooded cloaks of black or scarlet, bearing burdens upon their heads, and dragging forward children by the hands ; then more horses and cattle, moving under high bundles of mountain grass and bracken freshly cut, and, at the tail, a score or more of straggling men, with quilted jackets, and pikes upon their shoulders.

In front of all walked Turlogh, with his doctor and his chaplain at his side. The last vague glimmer of daylight in the evening air fell upon these three, as they felt the burnt stubble of the nearest field under their sandalled feet, and saw the black bulk of Dunbeekin loom close before them. There was doubt on the faces of the priest and the leech, but old Turlogh threw his head back, and looked into the dusky finish of the day with a smile at his lips and a resolute eye.

II

Hours later, in the shine of the harvest moon, the Lord of Dunbeekin stood upon the strand with a moiety of his people, and saw others of his men, wading waist-deep in the whitened waters, bear towards him in their arms his great guest, the Bishop.

Already there had come to land, by means of the little boat, some dozen priests and servants. These latter, subtle-faced and proud like all menials of the tonsured folk, held aloof in silence. Two of the younger priests, with the tails of their drenched gowns under their arms, stood at Turlogh's side, and spoke to him in whispers of strange matters. The Bishop, they said, was in the grasp of a mortal sickness. Nothing but the holy relics he brought

brought with him from Syria had availed to serve his iron will, and keep him alive to touch Irish land under his feet one more. These priests had learned something in Spain, and more here along their native coast in the past day, of the grievous burden of woe and spoliation which had been laid upon Munster. They gathered new knowledge now from Turlogh's saddened answers to their queries. All things westward from Cork had been put to the torch and sword. The English had passed over the land like a pestilence. The shadow they cast was death. Where were the English now? Ah, who should say? Somewhere across the hills. No one from Dunbeekin had followed them. It was not credible that they should return to the desert they had made.

"We moved away to the mountain-side," explained Turlogh. "They plundered and burned what we left behind. They are distant many miles now, and we have come to our own place again, to welcome our Lord Bishop. It is a sad thing that he would not be visiting me in the days of my strength and well-being. Now, when at last he comes, we are in ruins, and scarcely the poorest honours can be paid him. No man of our race was a bishop before him. Here in Dunbeekin we would have lighted his path with fires, and drained the sea for an offering of its treasures to him. But he would never come to me. He turned always instead to my cousin Conogher, the great man in the White Castle, the head of our tribe, the Chief of the Pilgrimage. We took grief to us because of that. And here now, at the end, he comes to my gate, and I am in a hard plight, and cannot receive him according to his high merits, and he, you say, is sick unto death. I crave of his charity that he will think no evil of our poverty and belittled powers." The chief gave a rueful little laugh. "For the matter of that," he added, "we have each had

our

our day. We are both poor men together. If my castle has been broken, his abbey has no two stones resting one upon another. He does well to come to me. We stood a long league apart in our good days. We can sleep back to belly now, under the common cloak of calamity. They would hang us together, on one limb of a tree, those heretic English wolves."

The more forward of the two priests held up a finger. "He knows nothing of it all," he murmured. "We have held it from him. No man of us dared to utter the smallest word of it to him. It is you who must tell him. You are his kinsman, and he will take it from you. He is a cold man with his priests, but he is warm to his own blood."

Turlogh laughed, then stared with round eyes at the speaker, and laughed again.

"He has no knowledge of it all, you say?"

"Since we set sail with the Genoese captain in Rogation week, from Cyprus, he has heard no word about Ireland. He has too proud a stomach for bad tidings, and no other came to us at any halting-place."

Four men, dripping out of the salt water, stood before Turlogh now, as he would have spoken further. They bent and drew short breaths under the stress of what they bore in their arms—a swollen, black-swathed bulk, shapeless as a sack of corn. Turlogh gazed at it in the deep shadows thrown by the men on the moon-side, and was in doubt. Then outlines shaped themselves, and he saw the gross, unwieldy figure of a short man grown unduly fat, with cowled head tipped forward to hide the face. In its hands this shrouded form held a small casket, laid with gold and precious stones. The faint glimmer of these in the moonlight led his eye to a blaze, as of a planet in the obscurity, emitted by a jewel at the side of the box.

The Lord of Dunbeekin crossed himself, and, kneeling on the wet sand, kissed the ring of his Bishop.

Slowly, as he rose to his feet, the sunken head was lifted, and he saw in the frame of the hood a mask of pallid, lifeless flesh, bloated beyond human semblance. He shuddered as he gazed, and found two strenuous eyes peering into his out of this monstrous visage.

"Such as my poor Dunbeekin is, my lord," he said, wonderingly, "it puts itself with pride under your feet."

"Its name shall be exalted above all others," said the Bishop. The voice came steady and clear-toned, as if informed by a spirit which carnal decay could not shake. "It is privileged to hold for a night the most priceless and inestimable of earth's treasures —the piece of the True Cross which I bear in my unworthy hands." He pushed the casket forward into the moonlight.

Turlogh knelt again, and with him every man on the strand.

The priests in the Bishop's train gave the signal for rising. They looked up toward the keep, where passing lights in the windows bespoke a flutter of preparation. They yawned and moved their feet, like weary men impatient for food and sleep. Turlogh placed himself by the side of the litter-men, still bearing the Bishop in their arms, and with them led the way.

"Some small affection of the blood," said the Bishop, as he was borne along up the path, "distorts and enfeebles my members for the moment. When I have placed this holy relic fittingly upon my high altar in Rosscarbery, and given orders for a shrine for it to my chief builders and artificers, I will make a penitential journey to St. Declan's, in sainted Ardmore, and drink from his well, and with his blessed intercession I shall come forth cleansed and whole."

Turlogh looked sidewise across his guest to the faces of the priests behind. Their glances answered his with significance.

"A fire has wrought some mischief in my house," he replied, haltingly; "I fear it is not all repaired as yet. It is the dry season of the year, and the flames had their will. But I will be hoping and praying that things are not so bad with me that your lordship will be put to discomfort. And after the long voyage in the ship, will you not be resting here two days, or three? We are kinsmen, my lord, and have grown to gray hairs without coming upon each other, till this night, which I account the chief hour of my life. And I will implore you to stay longer with me, Laurence, son of Ivar."

"At a future time, Turlogh, son of Fineen," returned the other. "But I will be pressing forward to-morrow, with no delay. I have been two years away from my See, and that is very long. The affairs of the diocese rest anxiously upon me. I will ask you to send a trusted man onward to-night, on your swiftest hobbie, to find my Vicar-General at Rosscarbery, and bring him to meet me to-morrow on the way, and render account of his stewardship. And, moreover, I have with me day and night the great responsibility of this peerless relic, this miracle of heavenly favour to us of Ross. I cannot be idling on the road till that is suitably bestowed in my cathedral. I will have you bear me company, Turlogh, son of Fineen. You are by repute well known to me, and you are of my blood. We O'Mahonys of Muskerry are better sons of the Church, I fear, than you men here on the wild coast. Many evil tales reach men's ears of deeds ill done here, in this rude Ivehagh. But you yourself have borne always a name for piety and docility and some little layman's learning. It was for this that I chose to make my landing here, and let Dunbeekin shelter the blessed relic first of all in Ireland. Besides, there were strange ships to be seen

off

off Crookhaven and the Cape, which in those lawless waters might signify nothing friendly. Has the country been more quiet and better ordered in these later times?"

"It has never been more undisturbed than at this moment," replied Turlogh, stealing another furtive glance backward at the priests. They smiled grimly at him, and nodded their heads.

The Bishop had closed his eyes, and his head drooped again upon his breast. Thus he passed unheeding through the broken postern, and saw nothing of the blackened havoc inside, where once the pleasant grassy bawn had been.

In the castle urgent shift had been made to render certain lower rooms once more habitable. The Bishop, when the tired men placed him upon the chair drawn forth with cushions by his servants, lacked the will to look about him. Turlogh, standing behind those who bore the lights, gazed, marvelling, at the huge girth of the man, whose trunk strained to bursting the black robe with purple buttons in which it was encased. The swollen face, hanging in the shadow, was more a death's head than ever. Still he held the casket upon his knees. The priest signed to Turlogh to go out, and he did so. When he sent his physician to them, they more curtly bade him also to leave them.

When the morrow came, no one in Dunbeekin found it strange that the Bishop did not set forth on his journey. The most simple had seen death writ large upon him. The story that he knew nothing of the terrible devastation that had swept the land bare, passed vaguely from mouth to mouth. It was not easy to understand that so lofty and pious an ecclesiastic, standing at the head of all men in the South for learning, should be in darkness in this matter, which was known to the very horse-boys. They dwelt curiously upon the thought of him—the high prelate with the marvellous relic, coming to shattered and spoilt Dunbeekin to die,

die, and never seeing the ruin about him, never learning that his cathedral was destroyed, his palace in ashes, his Vicar-General hanged in the Bandon forest, his priests and people dispersed. It was all very strange and troubling to the mind.

After mid-day Turlogh went again, and the priests brought him into the presence of the Bishop. Their faces had taken on a new fright, and they spoke in scared whispers as they moved along beside him.

"We know not how to tell him," they said. "He does be dying, and he will not listen. His confessor strove to speak to him of his end, but he drove him out with harsh words. At any hour the change may fall like a stroke upon him, and he not prepared! The crime of it would be resting like a mountain on our souls."

Turlogh would not promise to speak, but when he stood alone before Laurence, son of Ivar, who still sat bolstered in his chair, still with the jewelled casket on his shapeless knees, the courage came to him.

"My lord," he said, "you are not better. My physician has no more than laid an eye on you, yet shakes his head and speaks gravely. Will you not be having your chaplain come to you?"

The Bishop lifted his eyes, and they gazed sharply forth from the dulled, misshapen visage at his host. Minutes of silence passed thus.

"These frocked cowards of mine," he said at last, "they will have prompted you to this."

"They see what all see," replied the other. "It is high time for you to take thought of your peace with God, and gain your victory for the example of lesser people."

The Bishop's scrutiny of his kinsman's face was not relaxed, but the little eyes seemed to twinkle now, and a fugitive smile passed over the shaven, bloated jowl.

"I will

"I will not suffer my priests to be dictating to me," he said. "They have never dared give the law to me, living; it is not for them to be appointing a time for my death. I will choose my own season and the hour that pleases me best. St. Kieran's bones! Am I less a Bishop than I was?"

Turlogh smiled a little in turn. "I would not be saying you are less in any respect whatever," he replied. He stole a glance over the other's unwieldy bulk to point his meaning, and the Bishop laughed painfully.

"You are more after my heart than the others," he sighed, "and I come to you at the end, only for burial at your hands. That is the way of life, Turlogh, son of Fineen, and the way of death too. They speak a true word enough, these young men of mine. I cannot be going any further. I know it well enough that I shall die here in Dunbeekin. But it is not for them to tell me so. I was Vicar-General for twenty years, and Lord Bishop for eight, and no priest yet wagged his head before me, or gave me the word what I was to do. They are not much, these striplings of mine. They stand in good subjection to me, but they have no invention in their minds. They would not be fit to bury a bishop. It should be a great spectacle, with armed men and fires and a blaze of jewels among the funeral hangings, and the keening of trained women in companies, so that children would remember it when they were palsied with old age. These trivial boys I have with me are not capable of it. They would not lay out the worth of ten cows on me. They have pure hearts, but no proper sense of pageantry. Would *you* have been seeing any great prelate buried?"

Turlogh shook his head.

"But you have some learning," pursued the other. "It is known to you from books what princes and chieftains have done before

before our time to honour Holy Church. All they did I will be having done for me, and more too. Some bishops there were who, in their last days, laid down their croziers and put on the monk's habit, and died on the ashes in what they called humility. I am not one to crawl into Heaven that way. I will be borne across my diocese with pomp, and the clashing of spears and shields about me; and I will be entering Rosscarbery with my bells tolling and my priests chanting as they walk two by two, and all the people wailing at the sides of the path—and kneeling, mind you, as I pass on my way, with this great relic still in my hands. And this is what you will do for me—and you will provide entertainment and good places for the bards, and those who write chronicles in the abbeys, so that my fame may not suffer for the want of a supper or a stool by the fire, and you will administer my will and my estate as I devise. I ask you to promise me these things, Turlogh, son of Fineen, and you will swear it with your hand on this casket."

The old chief's eyes shone with a prompt and welcome resolve. He laid his hand, above the Bishop's, on the casing of the relic, and, kneeling to kiss the ring again, swore his oath.

"Send to me now my people," the prelate said, closing his eyes in weariness.

To the priests who came when his host had departed he gave commands. His *ordo* should be brought to him, and parchment or paper for writing, and pens and ink, and thereafter no one of them, nor anybody save his oldest body-servant, should enter the room for the space of three days. When they told him, perforce, that the fire in the castle had swept away all writing materials, he fell into a rage, until they made shift with quills fresh cut from a fowl dead in the bawn, and with a violet dye of wild-cress compounded by the herb-doctor. Then they left him alone with his *ordo*.

For

For three days he sat in solitude, and all were forbidden his presence. The old servant knew naught save that he wrote for ever on the margins of his book, slowly and with sorry travail. He touched no food or drink in that time, and at night, still stretched half-seated in his chair, with the casket upon his knees, he slumbered fitfully, eager always for the daylight and his writing again.

All Dunbeekin heard of these things, and dwelt in thought on nothing else. It was in no man's mind to set one stone on another in repair of the ruin the English had wrought. No net was put into the bay, and the women lifted not a finger to the task of making curds and white meats. Cattle were killed, and their flesh seethed in new milk, for food; but no cake was baked. The strong meat put a stormy heart into the men. They ground their spear-heads and javelins upon the stones, and cut from the green hides of the slain cattle new covers, soaked and stretched in sea-brine, for their round shields. When they looked one into another's face, a flash of expectant eyes passed, like a beam of sunlight on a skene. Their words were few, though, for the Bishop had a great name in all Carbery, and the shadow of his passing laid a spell upon their tongues.

On the third day, a little after sunrise, a commotion stirred among the priests and the strangers of the prelate's household. The chaplain had been summoned to the room of death, and the Bishop was making his confession. Then doors were opened, and Turlogh with those nearest him went in, until the chamber was filled, and the passage thronged with men lifting themselves on their toes to know what was to happen.

The Bishop, still in his chair, stared out of his eyes helplessly, and drew breaths which fought their way in and out of his vast girth of trunk. The mask which was his face was ashen-gray.

The

The casket had been lifted from his knees, and a priest held it beside him, so that his ringed hand might lie upon it. The physician, bending on the other side, offered to loosen the robe drawn with oppressive tightness across his breast.

The Bishop snarled an inarticulate dissent, and strove to lift his free hand.

"Not any button!" he murmured, thickly. "I abate no atom of my dignity. I will be dying with my robe seemingly disposed."

His eyes mounted above the pain to look at Turlogh.

"In my *ordo*," he gasped out, laboriously "all directions are there. You will observe the least of them!"

The Lord of Dunbeekin bowed, and made to take the book from the hand of the priest who held it. The Bishop interposed with a hoarse call, and strove to shake his head. Those closest round about gazed wonderingly into his troubled frowning face to catch a hint of his meaning. The chaplain, bearing the viaticum, stooped forward to listen for some whispered words.

"Open the book!" the slow, difficult command came. "Search the rubric. Read aloud to me in what manner a Bishop receives the viaticum!"

The priest with the book fumbled at its pages. He turned pale as he did so, and cast a confused, appealing glance at the chaplain. He went on, moving the leaves aimlessly, with a hanging lip.

"Read, read!" insisted the Bishop in stern monition.

The priest had the passage before him. He was a young man, soft-faced and gentle of mien. The tears started in his eyes, and his mouth quivered as he remained speechless.

The Bishop sought to rise in his chair. His lifeless face drew itself into lines of wrath; his eyes gleamed, and his voice gurgled turbulently in his throat for a moment, then burst forth in loud, unnatural tones.

"Shrine of Fachnan! Will you not be reading? Read aloud the words! In precisely what manner will a Bishop, in the hour of death, receive the body of our Lord? I command you to read it!"

In terror-stricken lispings the priest mumbled from the book shaking under his eyes that the Bishop should kneel to receive the Host.

Laurence, son of Ivar, raised his arms a little.

"Lift me then to my knees," he ordered them, with authority.

They cried out at him in frightened entreaty:

"For Christ's sake!" the chaplain, foremost among them, pleaded. "You cannot kneel, my lord! I implore you! I have the power—I omit the kneeling."

The Bishop bent his brows angrily upon his confessor, and shook his arms upward again with an imperious gesture.

"You have power, have you!" he called out in truculent scorn. "You will be giving the law to me, will you? Am I your Bishop? Tell me that, you cropped clown! And will you stand between God's anointed and the rubric? Here you, Gilcreest! you, Duarcan! Lift me to my knees! I command it! I will be dying as befits my rank and my station!"

Tremblingly the two servants moved to his side, and with shoulders under his arms, raised the Bishop to his full height. Then they bent to lower him forward. The clerics had turned their brimming eyes away. Turlogh, and the armed men of his sept behind him, who were unafraid yet looked to see a countenance desolated by an anguish too great to gaze upon, beheld instead a strange luminous softness spread over the Bishop's swollen lineaments, and bring them back to human likeness, and stamp upon them the aspect of triumphant martyrdom. The face of the Bishop was white as death now, and as he sank slowly to his knees,

knees, drops of water stood upon his brow. But a light of peace subdued all torment in his calm eyes.

Thus Laurence, son of Ivar, gained the victory of pilgrimage and devotion and penance. He seemed to the kneeling throng that filled the room to draw no breath, as the tremulous chaplain, bending down, anointed him for his entrance into the company of the Saints. While the words of absolution quivered upon the lips of the ministrant, the Bishop fell forward upon his face.

"A spirit of pure chastity has departed from among us," said Turlogh, solemnly blessing himself as he rose to his feet.

"A tower of magnanimity and a treasury of wisdom in these parts," responded the confessor.

"A bestower of rich presents and a chief conservator of the canons of the Church," added one of the priests.

The sound of the women's lamentations without came into the chamber of death. Turlogh put his hand upon his sword, and drew it forth, and kissed the cross upon its hilt.

"His lightest wish for his burial will be a law to me and to the people of my house." He spoke the words slowly, and his armed men, hearing them, lifted their heads in the air.

III

In the noon hour Dunbeekin stood again under the grey sky, deserted and soundless.

Old Turlogh, girt as no man had seen him before, with iron upon his breast and a cap of shining steel drawn over his whitened locks, had gathered all who belonged to him in the bawn, and spoken to them from where he stood on the stone of the broken well.

"I will

"I will be going hence," he said, "to bury the holy man, my kinsman, my Lord Bishop. His commands rest upon me, and they are welcome. No other such honour has fallen to me in all my years. But honours that have no substance to the touch are not alike in all eyes. Moreover, this transparent gem of pure piety whom I will be laying in his appointed grave was not close in blood to us. His people have our name, and they are Kian's sons as well as we, but their birthplace is strange to us. In Muskerry of the Rushes they do not be giving us of the coast much praise or affection. It is their custom to speak of us as pirates and heathen, and even he who lies dead within was not slow to utter that same word. The saint of his vows, too, the holy maiden of the O'Driscolls—*Mughain*—is no friend to us of Ivehagh. Our sea-forts are spattered with the blood of the O'Driscolls, and my great father, Fineen, son of Conogher of the Steeds, broke down their shrine of Mughain at Dunashad. Therefore you are not bound by any near tie to give your lives for this burial. I will not be laying it on any man for his duty that he should come with me. Those with minds to the contrary will be freely returning now to the hills, for their greater safety, or holding this place till my brother comes back from the army of the Earl. I will be taking with me none but willing people, and I will have it known to them that they are not like to see Dunbeekin again with any mortal vision."

When Turlogh in another hour led forth from his gates the funeral train of the Bishop, no breathing creature remained behind. There went with him, to the last one, the robed men of his household, and his galloglasses and kernes, and the hooded women of years, who struck their hands together and screamed the death-wail as they walked; and the younger maidens with short veils, and

and even to the smallest of the children, clinging at their mothers' skirts. And the spade-men and the horse-boys drove forward the herds and led the horses not bearing riders, and on these were fastened all the chattels and light possessions of Dunbeekin. In the centre of the armed men walked the priests, and before them proceeded eight servants, bearing upon sticks the pall of the Bishop; and all could see him lying there, under a seemly cover of black cloth, with the casket of the holy relic rising sharp-cornered above his breast.

There was no heat in the air, and they moved on over the wasted country at a good speed. As twilight gathered, they passed from the defiles of the hills into greener vales, where the streams ran eastward, and no marks of ruin met the eye. Here the beasts fed upon the harvest grass, while a heifer was slain and seethed for human eating; and here the fighting men looked a last time to their blades and spear-heads and their yew bows. Darkness fell, and they went forward again, with Goron the Quick-Eyed in front of all, calling the way, and the keening of the weary elder women rising no higher than the moan of the sea-wind they had left behind for ever.

In the night, further inland, lights began to gleam upon their course, as if on beacon hills beyond. Then a small flame, borne swiftly, crossed the path nearer at hand. The pale overcast moon-light made visible only the dim rolling shape of the slope down which they were making their way.

Goron ran back, and then, after hasty whispers of counsel, went forth again into the darkness, with his hand on Turlogh's bridle rein. They were well in advance of their train when the light they had seen and then lost flashed again suddenly in their very faces; and they, halting, beheld crowded black shadows of men straight in their path.

"What

"What is this all? Who are you?" was sharply demanded out of the obscurity, in a tongue strange to Goron.

Turlogh, the learned man, had the English.

"I am the Lord of Dunbeekin," he made answer, in a cool voice, "and I will be proceeding with my people to Rosscarbery to bury our Lord Bishop, as befits his station and great fame in these parts."

The voice of the unseen captain laughed, amid a sinister rattle of steel on steel.

"There is no Rosscarbery left on the face of the earth. There is no Bishop, alive or dead. There is no Lord of Dunbeekin, but only an old thief of a rebel hiding in the mountains, who called himself such among his native savages. Him we will hang when found, as we hung his kinsman, the barbarian Donal *Grany*, on the lintel of his own castle in Kinalmeaky."

"I am he of whom you speak," returned Turlogh; "and when I have buried my Bishop, and fulfilled to the last the commands of his testament, which I have here with me writ by his own hand, we will talk further of this hanging. But now I will be moving forward on my way."

Other sounds of laughter rose about them in the darkness.

"They are all mere Irish," said a rough man's voice, after a moment. "They bear with them a bier of some sort, true enough, but they have their women and children and herds with them as well. It is a strange game. Why should we not fall upon them now, before they have wrought the mischief of their conceit?"

"You are outside the law," spoke the first voice, that of authority. "We may put you all to the sword, here where we find you."

"I know of no law but my Lord Bishop's wish," replied Turlogh.

Turlogh. "I am not outside that. I will be making a truce with you until he has been buried as he desired. Thereafter I ask no accommodation at your hands."

"Saw any one ever such another land of holy men and lunatics?" communed the English captain with the blackness.

"Nay," one of his party urged, "it is not holiness but empty superstition, and to be a lunatic argues previous sound wit, which these savages never yet possessed. Say rather an island of idolatrous idiots."

The captain spoke again: "If you are Turlogh Mahowne, as you declare yourself, go forward then to Rosscarbery, if you can find it by the smoke over its ashes, and bury your Papist carrion wherever the ground is not baked too stiff for digging, and when you have made an end of it, then will we have more talk."

The day dawned, and showed to Turlogh and his caravan bodies of armed men on either side, moving along at a distance, in even progress with the funeral train. There were leaders in the saddle, encased in metal to the thighs; and the footmen, breeched in buff leather and with iron caps, bore long pikes on their shoulders. In numbers they were to the men of Dunbeekin as three to one; and in another four hours, upon the meeting of the high roads outside Rosscarbery, two score more joined them.

"They are fine men," said Goron, walking at his master's bridle. "I have never seen them in the open country before. They are better than we are. They will make but one bite of us, as a white trout with a May-fly."

"The May-fly!" answered Turlogh, musingly. "Two years does it be spending underground, preparing its wings. And then —the portion of one day up above in the air and the sunlight, and it ends in the beak of a bird or the jaws of a strong fish. Your speech is always wise, Goron, son of Tiarnan. It is I who

who am the May-fly, and this is my one little morning in the world."

Where Rosscarbery had been, Turlogh and his people traced through choked paths and streets blocked with stones of broken houses the place of the cathedral. They moved about among its blackened ruins, and lifting great blocks of masonry from the site of the high altar, dug there a grave and shaped a rude coffin of large stones, and laid Laurence, son of Ivar, to his rest. They knelt uncovered while the chaplain said the funeral mass; and the singing priests chanted, and the elder women raised their voices in the last wail over the grave.

Then Turlogh gave a sign to his people, and going out, led in his own horse over the tumbled débris of the shattered transept. He drew his sword, and the animal fell with a pierced throat upon the place where they had buried the Bishop. The men of Dunbeekin brought forward the other horses, neighing in their fright, and slew them one by one; and the cattle, driven in and leaping wildly in terror over the despoiled floors, were beaten down with the war-axes, and piled, smoking, on the high altar. At Turlogh's command, the jewels and fine cloths and books they had brought were heaped here too, and with his own hand he struck a flame and set them alight. The smoke curled thickly outward, and forced the chieftain back. He led the way forth to the open air. In the space beyond the west front he came upon a line of English drawn close to bar his passage. Over his shoulders he saw other lines guarding the sides against escape. His eye sought out the captain, and he moved toward him.

"There will be a price on my head?" he asked, calmly—"on me, Turlogh, son of Fineen, Lord in Dunbeekin?"

The other shook his head.

"You flatter yourself," he said. "You were not accounted of sufficient

sufficient dignity for that. A trifle of drink-money, perhaps, to the man who should run you down in the bog and cut your throat: no more."

"That is very bad news for me," replied Turlogh. "If it were otherwise, I would be asking you for that money, to place it there in the fire I have built in offering to my Lord Bishop. All that I had I have given, but it is not nearly enough. My Lord Bishop was mercifully spared the knowledge of the ruin and great calamities that have fallen upon us all. He died bequeathing large moneys to the poor, and a sum of the value of sixty cows for masses for his soul; and other sums for a grand tomb, and for needy scholars and the like; and I am pledged to carry out his will. His poor have been starved or murdered; his students are dispersed; out of charity the masses will be said in Spain and France, and other pious lands, whither our priests have fled. But I would not that any penny should be spared to the enrichment of his tomb. Yet if there be nothing more forthcoming, then there is an end to my task. And now my truce with you will be over, too."

The young Englishman looked at the tall pale old man in doubtful silence for a little.

"You are no better than a heathen, in your spiritual part," he said at last; "but I know not that you are a harmful rebel. Get you back to your Dunbeacon, as you call it, and take your motley ragamen with you, and swear an oath of loyal behaviour to Her Most Splendid Majesty before you go; and the truce—who shall say—it may last your lifetime. At the worst, it was your brother we wanted, not you."

Turlogh straightened his thin form, and stepped out to face the captain.

"They call me Turlogh of the Two Minds," he said, with a greater

greater calmness than before. "All my life I have not shed any man's blood, because it did not seem to me to be wholly a good thing to do, and I hesitated. But now, in my old age, my last day, I have only one mind in me. You and your people have come where no one asked you, and you have put massacre and desolation of famine and destruction upon us, when we had not deserved it. And I have told you that our truce is ended, and you will not be believing it, and now I will prove it to you."

Upon the word he smote the captain in the face with one hand, and with the other plunged his skene into his neck. The two men clutched each other, and as they toppled, writhing, to the ground, rival cries of battle split the air. The English, with full-mouthed oaths and shouts of wrath, hurled themselves forward. The Irish, huddling backward to guard their unarmed folk, raised a defiant answering yell, and fought in wild despair. They were hewn down where they stood, and after them their priests and women and children. Nothing that had come out of Dunbeekin was left with a breath in it.

The English captain, chalk-faced, and with his throat swathed in stained bandages, leant upon his sword while the straps of his cuirass were unbuckled, and the cumbrous breastplate lifted from him. He looked down with a rueful, musing half-smile at the trampled form of an old man which had been dragged out from a confused pile of bodies, and lay stretched at his feet. The head was bruised and the white hair was torn and clotted, but the withered upturned face, looking very small and waxen now, wore an aspect of pride and sweetness which moved him. He gently pushed the hair aside from the marble temples with his boot, and sighed as he looked again.

"Shall we send the head to Cork?" asked another officer, resting on one knee beside the body. "After all, he was a lord

lord in the eyes of the Irish, and he had a castle, such as it was."

"No," responded the captain, on reflection. "He came a long way to bury his Bishop, and he gave him a funeral of distinction to the full measure of his ability. Bear him inside, and let him lie beside his Bishop. They have heads and to spare in Cork without his."

Then after a little pause he lifted his gaze and turned away.

"It may be that you are right," he said again. "It may be they are idolatrous idiots and nothing better; but when I looked upon the old man lying there, the whimsy came to me. I should have liked him to have been my father."

A sharp exclamation of surprise came from the kneeling officer, and the captain wheeled on his heel.

"I'll be sworn I saw it!" the former cried, staring fixedly down at the face on the ground. "When you spoke those words, the old rebel's body stirred, and his death's-head shook itself."

The speaker had a knife out from his belt, and the captain bent to lay a sharply restraining hand on his arm. Together they scrutinized the body before them. It was plainly a corpse.

"My oath on it, he moved!" insisted the kneeling man.

"You dream!" said the captain, stoutly enough, but a little shudder ran through the sigh with which he turned away.

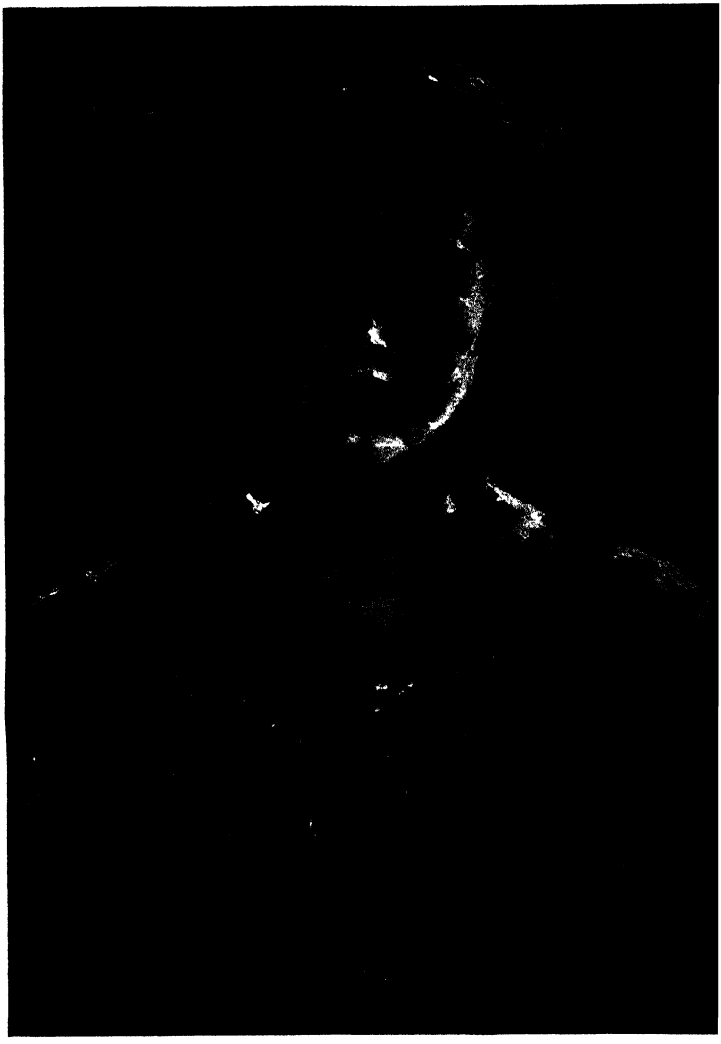
Two Pictures

By Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes

I. Marie

II. Jonquil





To the Bust of the Pompeian Cœlia

By Leila Macdonald

ALAS, my Cœlia, that your grace
Could not prevail on ardent Death
To spare your sweet perfumed breath,
The youthful glories of your face.
But still you smile:
Your beauty, never conquered yet,
Disdains the tears of men's regret.

Across your curved and rosy ears,
How fair the curling ringlets fell,
And kissed your bosom's snowy swell—
Olympus to your lover's tears.
We wonder now,
Within your body's rounded grace
What woman's soul found resting-place?

And in what flowered path of bliss
Did the stern Fates direct your feet?
Where only youth and beauty meet,
And every bower conceals a kiss?
Ah, happy maid!
That bowed your head to Love's command,
The fairest mistress in the land.

What

What murmur in the summer air,
 What gentle tread of sandalled feet,
 What silken rustle through the street,
When maidens to the bath repair.
 They smiling stand,
Throw off the veilings of their grace,
And court the waters' cool embrace.

At the fair banquet's joyous hour,
 'Mid scent, and song, and whirling dance,
 You bought men's worship with a glance ;
Like shaded fire, its languorous power.
 Ah, cruel eyes !
Hyperion, when his Sun arose,
No brighter glories could disclose.

Or, at the Goddess' awful shrine,
 With shrouded head and trembling knees,
 The shuddering music of your pleas
Strove vainly for the ears divine.
 Pleas, who shall say,
For children's smiles ; for lover's kiss ;
For all that makes a woman's bliss ?

The radiant waters rise and meet,
 And gather on the tideless shore ;
 But Cœlia's footsteps sound no more,
And silence crowds the eager street.
 The widowed bay
Through glowing day and scented night
Mourns for her city of delight.

Alas,

Alas, my Cœlia, you, whose grace
Has perished with the silent Time,
Accept this homage of a rhyme,
Paid to where stone reflects your face.
For stone may show
Not all Vesuvius could eclipse
The sunshine of your smiling lips.

Two Pictures

By Caroline Gotch

I. On the Seine

II. Motherhood



Books

A Letter to the Editor and an Offer of a Prize

From "The Yellow Dwarf"

SIR: In London, if one is placed sufficiently low in the social hierarchy—or if, high placed, one is sufficiently fond of low life—to frequent houses in which Literature as a subject of conversation is not inhibited, one may occasionally hear it said of this or that recently published book that it has just been "reviewed" in the *Athenæum* or "noticed" in the *Academy*, "praised" by the *Spectator* or "slated" by the *Saturday Review*. I don't know whether you will agree with me in deeming it significant that one almost never hears of a book nowadays that it has been *criticised*. People who run as they talk are not commonly precisians in their choice of words, but the fact that the verb *to criticise*, as governing the accusative case of the substantive *book*, has virtually dropped out of use, seems to me a happy example of right instinct. Books (books in *belles lettres*, at any rate, novels, poems, essays, what you will, not to include scientific, historical, or technical works), books in *belles lettres* are almost never criticised in the professedly critical journals of our period in England. They are reviewed, noticed, praised, slated, but almost never criticised.

 I hasten

I hasten to exempt from my indictment those journals that are not professedly critical; to exempt trade journals, for instance, medical journals, journals of sport and fashion, and the daily newspapers. The most one can fairly require of one's daily newspaper is that it should give one the news of the day. I'm not denying that a craving for the news of the day is a morbid craving, but it is to gratify it that the daily newspapers are daily born, daily to die. We can't with any sort of justice ask our penny daily for a considered criticism of books. That were to ask for more than our pennyworth; and besides, the editor might reasonably retort upon us, "You have come to the wrong shop." We don't go to the ironmonger's for a leg of mutton, nor to the stationer's to get our hair cut. Wherefore I in no wise reproach the penny dailies (nor even the formidabler threepenny daily) for sedulously eschewing anything remotely in the nature of considered literary criticism.* Let me add, at once, that I don't reproach them, on the other hand, for their habits of printing long columns of idiomatic Journalese, and heading the same NEW BOOKS. They thereby give employment to the necessitous; they encourage publishers (poor dears!) to publish—and to advertise; they deceive nobody within the four-mile radius; they furnish the suburbs with an article the suburbs could probably not distinguish from the real thing if they saw the two together; and (to crown all) it is the inalienable privilege of the British reader to skip. I buy my *Morning Post*, that I may follow, from my humble home in Mayfair, the doings of the Great in Bayswater; my *Daily News*, that I may be informed of the fluctuations of Mr. Gladstone's health; my *Telegraph*, that I may learn what is happening

* But surely, in the *Daily Chronicle*, we have at least one notable exception.—Ed. Y. B.

in

in Balham, watch the progress of the shilling testimonial to Dr. Grace, savour the English of Mr. Clement Scott, and keep up my Italian by studying the leaders of Mr. Sala; my *Pall Mall Gazette* . . . I really can't think why, unless it be to enjoy the prankful cubsomeness (not to mention the classical attainments) of Mr. W. E. Henley's truculent fifth form; but it is certain that I buy not one of these inexpensive sheets to the end of getting a considered criticism of books.

The case of the professedly critical periodicals, however, is a different and a graver case. They are professedly critical, and they do not criticise. They review, they notice, they extol, they scold; but criticise, but weigh, discriminate, analyse, perceive, appreciate—who will pretend that they do that? They wield the bludgeon and the butter-knife, they employ the copying-press and the garbling-press; but those fine instruments of precision which are the indispensable tools of the true critic's craft, they would appear never to have heard of. For the sake of a modern instance, examine for a moment the methods of the *Saturday Review*. There was a time, and that not so long ago, when the *Saturday Review*, though never critical, was at least diverting; it was supercilious, it was impertinent, it was crabbed and cross-grained, but it was witty, it was diverting. I am speaking, however, of the present *Saturday Review*, which is another matter. From week to week I take it in, and read (or make some sort of an endeavour to read) its "literary" columns. And what do I find? I find articles with such felicitous headings as "Mr. So-and-So—Minor Poet;" I find perennial allusions to the length of another poet's hair; but—criticism? I find that where once the *Saturday Review* was supercilious and diverting, it is now violent and provincial; but—criticism? I find that where once it spoke to me with the voice of a soured but well-bred and rather witty academic don, it

now

now bellows at me in the tones of a bull of Bashan ; but—criticism ? I find—I find anything you like but criticism. Yet, surely, the *Saturday Review* is amongst the most notorious of ~~the professedly critical~~ journals of Great Britain. The *Spectator*, the *Academy*, the *Athenæum*, are different, very different—with a likeness. The likeness, I would submit, consists in the rigorous exclusion of considered literary criticism from their columns.*

I am more concerned for the moment to mention and to deplore this state of things than to inquire into its causes. But certain of its causes invite no inquiry ; they are obvious, they "spring at our eyes." Foreigners, to be sure, pretend that our trouble is radical and ineradicable ; that the British mind is essentially and hopelessly uncritical ; that directly we attempt to criticise we begin to compare. ("They can only communicate their opinion of Oranges by translating it in terms of Onions," says Varjine ; and he adds, "The most critical Englishman I ever met was a clown in a circus at Marseilles.") That is a question I won't go into here. What is obvious and indisputable is this : that with the dissemination of ignorance through the length and breadth of our island, by means of the Board School, a mighty and terrible change has been wrought in the characters both of the majority of readers and of the majority of writers. The "gentleman and scholar" who still flourished when I was young, has sunken into unimportance both as a reader and as a writer. The bagman and the stockbroker's clerk (and their lady wives and daughters) 'ave usurped his plyce and his influence as readers ; and the pressman has picked up his fallen pen, —the pressman, sir, or the presswoman ! Well, what, by the operation of the law of cause and effect, what should we naturally

* The Yellow Book must note its dissent from the Yellow Dwarf's observations, in so far, at least, as they affect the *Spectator*.—Ed.

expect ?

expect? With an illiterate reading mob howling at our doors, and a tribe of pressmen scribbling at our tables, what, in the name of the universe, should we expect? What we get; not so? And the poor "gentleman and scholar," where he survives, is exposed to full many risks and full many sorrows. If he reads his penny daily in the morning, he is in danger of seeing his own critical vision obscured or distorted for the rest of the day, as his palate would be blunted should he breakfast off raw red herring. If he wants to write a book, he knows that there is no public to buy or read or understand it: and what's the use of casting pearls before animals that prefer acorns? If he wants to read a book, he knows that the entire output of decent literature in England during a year he might easily learn by heart in a fortnight. So he must read a foreign book or an old book, or else fall back, for fiction, upon our Stanley Weymans and our J. M. Barries; for poetry, upon our Sir Lewis Morrises or our Sir Edwin Arnolds; and for criticism . . . shall I say upon our Mr. Harry Quilters?

The critical periodicals of Great Britain make it a practice to review, notice, praise, or slate almost everything in the guise of a book or booklet which, by hook or crooklet, contrives to get itself put forth in print. They manage these affairs better in furrin' parts. In furrin' parts, your critical periodical silently ignores ninety-and-nine in every hundred of the books that are printed, and then—*criticises* the hundredth.

The fact is, Mr. Editor, that in order to criticise you must have certain endowments—you must have a certain equipment. You must have eyes and ears, you must have taste; you must have the analytic faculty and the knack of nice expression; you must have the habit of getting at close quarters with your thought and your emotion—you must be able to explain *why*, for what qualities, for what defects, you cherish Mr. Henry James (for instance),

instance), regard Mr. Marriott Watson with expectant pleasure, dread Mr. Anthony Hope, and flee from Miss Marie Corelli as from the German measles. You must have knowledge—a University education, indeed, would do you no harm, nor an acquaintance with the literatures of France and Russia. You must have a *tradition of culture*. And, above all, you must have leisure, —for any sort of considered writing you must have leisure.

Well, how many of these endowments, how much of this equipment is your Pressman, your Saturday Reviewer, likely to have? Taste? The analytic faculty? The instinct for the just word? Knowledge? A University education? An acquaintance with the writings of de la Clos and Frontin, of Poushkine and Karamanzine? A tradition of culture? And leisure? *Leisure*. He is paid at the rate of so many shillings a column. And he has his bread to earn; and bread, my dear, is costly. One does what one can. One glances hurriedly through the book that has been sent one "for review," and then (provided one is honest, and has no private spite to wreak upon the author, no private envy to assuage, no private log to roll) one dashes off one's "thousand words," more or less, of unconsidered praise or unconsidered abuse, as the case may be. One says the book is "good," the book is "bad." Good—bad: with the variations upon them to be found in his Dictionary of Synonyms: there are your Pressman-Critic's alternative criticisms. Good—with greater or smaller emphasis; bad—with greater or smaller virulence, and more or less frequent references to the length of the author's hair. There is your Pressman-Critic's "terminology." A novel by Mr. George Meredith is—good; a novel by Mr. Conan Doyle is—good. You would hardly call that manner of criticism searching, enlightening, exhaustive; you would hardly call it *nuancé*, I fancy, sir.

But you are wondering why I should take the matter so grievously

ously to heart. I will tell you. It is not, I confess, for patriotic reasons; not that I weep to see England the least among nations in this particular. It is for reasons purely personal and selfish. I love to read criticism. And to deprive me of the chance to do so is to deprive me of a pleasure. I love to discover my own thoughts and feelings about a book accurately expressed in elegant and original sentences by another fellow. When I happen upon such criticism I experience a glow of delight and a glow of pride, almost as great as if I had written it myself; and yet I have had no trouble. Monsieur Anatole France has kindly taken the trouble for me. Well, sir, we have no Monsieur Anatole France in these islands; or, if we have one, he doesn't write for our professedly critical journals. I ransack the serried columns of the *Saturday Review*, and its contemporaries and rivals, in vain, from week to week, to discover my own thoughts and feelings about books accurately expressed in elegant and original sentences. I discover pretty nearly everything except the thing I pine for. I discover plenty of pedantry and plenty of ignorance, plenty of feebleness and plenty of good stodgy "ability," plenty of glitter and plenty of dullness, plenty of fulsomeness and more than a plenty of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness; but the thing I seek is the one thing I never find.

When I went abroad for my holiday, in August, I took with me a bagful of comparatively recent books, all of which I read, or tried to read, while I was drinking the waters and being douched and swindled at Aix-les-Bains. I yearn, sir, to see my thoughts and feelings about these books set forth in elegant and original phrases by another fellow. And herewith I offer a prize. I will indicate very cursorily in a few rough paragraphs what my thoughts and feelings about the books in question are; and then I will offer a prize of—well, of fifty shillings—say, £2 10s. 0d.—to any one,

man

man or woman, who will, on or before the 31st day of December in the present year, put into my hands a typewritten manuscript containing what I shall admit to be a polished, a considered—in one word, a satisfactory expression of my views. I make no reservation as to the length of the manuscript. It may run to as many thousand words as its writer wishes.

The first book I opened was not, after all, exactly a recent book. It was Mr. Hall Caine's *Manxman*. I confess I didn't open it with much hope of being able to read it, for past experience had taught me that to read a book by Mr. Hall Caine to the far-glimmering end was apt to be an enterprise beyond my powers of endurance. In early life I had begun his *Shadow of a Crime*, and had broken down at the eightieth page; when I was older, I had begun *The Deemster*, and had broken down at the eighth—the fearless energy of youth was mine no longer. However, I had been the owner of an uncut copy of the *Manxman* for well-nigh a twelvemonth; and I was in a Spartan temper; and I said—with some outward show of resolution, but with a secret presentiment of failure—I said, "We'll have a try."

Alas, at page 41, where the curtain falls—I beg Mr. Hall Caine's pardon—where the curtain descends upon the seventh scene, I saw myself beaten. "The moon had come up in her whiteness behind, and all was quiet and solemn around. Philip fell back and turned away his face." All was quiet and solemn *araound!* It was the final, the crushing, blow. I too fell back and turned away my face. I closed the *Manxman*, and gave it to my valet, who, it may please Mr. Hall Caine to learn, said, "Thenk you, sir;" and, a week afterwards, the honest fellow told me he had enjoyed it.

A talent for reading the works of Mr. Hall Caine is a talent that

that Heaven has denied me: one can't expect everything here below. Their artificial simplicity, their clumsiness, their heaviness, their dreary counterfeit of a kind of common humour, their laborious strivings for a kind of shoddy pathos, their ignorance, their vulgarity, their pretentiousness, and withal their unmitigated insipidity—these are the qualities, no doubt, that make them popular with the middle classes, that endear them to the Great Heart of the People, but they are too much for the likes o' me. I don't mind vulgarity when I can get it with a dash of spice, as in the writings of Mr. Ally Sloper, or with a swagger, as in the writings of Mr. Frank Harris. I don't mind insipidity when I can get it with a touch of cosmopolitan culture, as in the writings of Mr. Karl Bædeker. But vulgarity and insipidity mingled, as in the writings of Mr. Hall Caine, are more than my weak flesh can bear. On the title-page of *The Manxman* Mr. Caine prints this modest motto: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" On page 6 he observes: "In spite of everything he loved her. That was where the bitterness of the evil lay." On page 7, "A man cannot fight against himself for long. That deadly enemy is certain to slay." On page 11, "His first memory of Philip was of sleeping with him, snuggled up by his side in the dark, hushed and still in a narrow bed with iron ends to it, and of leaping up in the morning and laughing." And then, on page 41, "The moon had come up in her whiteness behind, and all was quiet and solemn around." Note the subtle perceptions, the profound insight, the dainty verbiage, the fresh images, the musical rhythm of these excerpts. "That was where the bitterness of the evil lay!" "A man cannot fight against himself!" "The moon had come up in her whiteness beyind!" Faugh, sir, the gentleman writes with his mouth full. Let us haste to an apothecary's, and buy an ounce

ounce of civet, to sweeten our imagination. And all was quiet and solemn *araound!* *

At the forty-first page I closed the *Manxman*, and gave it to my valet. It was as if for forty-one leaden minutes I had been listening to the speech of Emptiness incarnate; but a pompous Emptiness, a rhetorical Emptiness, an Emptiness with the manner of an Oracle and the accent of an Auctioneer: an Emptiness that would have lulled me to slumber if it hadn't sickened me. I wonder how Mr. Hall Caine keeps awake as he writes.

Nature abhors a vacuum, but the British Public, it would appear, loves an Emptiness. The Public, however, doesn't matter. The Great Heart of the People has warmed to bad literature in all ages and in all countries. The disgraceful thing is that in England bad literature is taken seriously by persons who profess to be Critics. The critics of France don't take Monsieur Georges Ohnet seriously; the critics of Russia don't take Alexis Gorloff seriously; but the critics of England do take Mr. Hall Caine seriously. Well, it only shows what a little pretentiousness in this ingenuous land will accomplish.

The value of pretentiousness can scarcely be too highly commended to young authors. If you are more desirous of impressing the ignorant than of doing good work, if you would rather make the multitude stare than make the remnant gaze—Be pretentious, and let who will be clever. A young author who appears to have

* A friend assures me that if I had pursued my wanderings a little further in Mr. Hall Caine's garden of prose, I might have culled still fairer blossoms; and gives as a specimen this, from page 141: "She met him on the hill slope with a cry of joy, and kissed him. It came into his mind to draw away, but he could not, and he kissed her back." How quaint Manx customs are. In London he would almost certainly have kissed her lips.

taken

taken this excellent maxim to heart is Mr. John Oliver Hobbes. His was the next book I directed an attack upon, after I had beaten my retreat from the impenetrable *Manxman*. But I found myself confronted with Pretentiousness at the very drawbridge. There fluttered a flag—I daresay, on my unsupported testimony, you could scarce believe it; but I can refer you to the book itself, or (it has been advertised like a patent medicine) to its publishers' advertisements, for corroboration—there fluttered a flag bearing this device—

THE GODS
SOME MORTALS
AND
LORD WICKENHAM
BY
JOHN OLIVER
HOBBES

This, in Christian England! And above it and below it were wonderful drawings, drawings of gods and goddesses and mortals; and, at one side of it, another wonderful drawing, a drawing of an Owl.

When I recovered my breath I turned to Chapter I., *An Aristocratic Household*, and before I had reached the bottom of that short first page, here is the sort of sentence I had to face and vanquish: "The young girl who came forward seemed to have been whipped up into a fragile existence from the very cream of tenderness, love, and folly." It is doubtless very pretty, but do you know what it means? Anyhow, it has the great merit of being Pretentious. I can see the Pressman-Critic, as his eye lights upon it. I can see him "sit up." I can hear him gasp, and

and murmur to himself, "Ah! *This* is a book to be treated with respect. This is *written*." Thus, by a discreet appreciation of the value of Pretentiousness, Mr. Hobbes breaks his Pressman-Critic's spirit with his title-page, and has him entirely subjugated about half-way down page 1.

But do you imagine that the author's pretentiousness begins and ends here, at the threshold? Far from it. His book is pretentious in every line; I might almost say in every dash and comma. It is linked pretentiousness long drawn out. It is packed with aphorisms, with reflections: it is diversified with little essays, little shrieks, and philosophic sighs: all pretentious. On page 135, for instance: "The weak mind is never weary of recounting its failures." *On dirait* the late Mr. Martin Tupper—not? On page 23: "O Science! art thou not also sometimes in error?" *On dirait* the late Mr. Thomas Carlyle. On page 13: "Men should be careful how they wish." *On dirait* Monsieur de la Palisse. And then, what shall we say of this? In Chapter IV. Dr. Simon Warre writes a letter; and the author heads the chapter: *In which Warre displays a forgotten talent!* Oddsfish, the letter one is justified in expecting, after that! What one gets is a quite ordinary, gossipy, rather vulgar, rather snobbish, very pretentious letter; and the only talent Warre displays is the talent of the Reporter, the Reporter for a Society paper; and that talent is unfortunately not forgotten.

Intending competitors for my prize will observe, furthermore, that the story, the plot, of *The Gods, Some Mortals, and Lord Wickenham*, is exactly the same dear old story that used to delight our nursery governesses when we were children. A good husband—oh, so good!—married to a horrid, wicked wife; a lord; a villain; an elopement. The same dear old conventional story, the

the same dear old conventional personages. I can't say *characters*, for there isn't a character, there isn't an individual, there isn't the ghost of a human creature, in the book. Simon Warre, his wife, his friend, his wife's lover, Allegra—not one is a man or a woman of flesh and blood, whom we can recognize, whom we can think of as of people we have known: each is a formula, a shadow, a conventional type. And then—Allegra! Allegra carried me back an appalling number of years into the past, to the time when I was young and foolish. Everybody, when he was young and foolish (and generally in the flush of enthusiasm that follows his first visit to Italy—for a fortnight, at Easter, say), everybody has written a novel whereof the heroine was a pale mysterious Italian girl, the daughter of a nobleman; and wasn't she almost always named Allegra? And then everybody who was prudent has burned his manuscript. I burned mine, thank mercy; but Mr. John Oliver Hobbes has published his. Ah, weel, bairn, ye maun just live and lurrun.

"Ah, but the style! The style's the thing!" cries the Pressman. Quite so; the style. Mr. Hobbes seems to be perpetually straining in his style for the quality vaguely called distinction (which, I lately read, in the *Saturday Review*, of all places, is as easy as minor poetry), but, easy as it is, he never succeeds in achieving it. What he does achieve is—sometimes a feeble echo of Mr. George Meredith; sometimes a flimsy imitation of Miss Austen; sometimes a bit that is Carlylean or Tupperesque; and, more often, gems of pure Journalese, so that one might wonder, "Is Mr. Hobbes, too, a Pressman?" But *style* is personal, style is the man. Here there is no style; there is only a mechanical mixture of the washings of many styles.

From the leaden pretentiousness of Mr. Hall Caine and the glassy pretentiousness of Mr. John Oliver Hobbes, it was restorative

storative to turn to the naturalness, the honesty, and the simplicity of Miss Ménie Muriel Dowie's *Gallia*, Miss Ella D'Arcy's *Monochromes*, and Mr. Kenneth Grahame's *Golden Age*.

Of Miss D'Arcy's book I will leave the would-be winners of my prize full liberty to say what they like; only, they must say this: that the book gives its author at once a place among the three masters (indulge the gender), the three masters of the short-story form at present working in the English tongue; and they must add that Miss D'Arcy is by no means the smallest of the three, and that she does not in the least resemble either of the other two.

Again, of Mr. Grahame's book, say what you will; but be careful also to say that a more melodious or mellow book you have seldom read. Dwell upon the sweetness of the book's *voice*, the tenderness of its humour; dwell upon its pathos, its sympathy, its imagination; upon the rich golden glow it has, which is like a second justification of its title.

In *Gallia*, I own, I suffered one disappointment—nay, I suffered two. First, I was all along haunted by a suspicion that the book had a moral, that it had a purpose, that it was intended, in some measure, as a tract for the times, and not as a mere frank effort in the art of fiction. And secondly, I missed that brilliant personal note, that vibration of the author's living voice, which had delighted me in the *Girl in the Karpathians*, and (still more) in the marvellously clever and vivid little drama, *Wladislaw's Advent*, which you, sir, published some time back in the YELLOW BOOK. But, all the same, though I could have wished Miss Dowie to come nearer to the front in proper person, I enjoyed reading *Gallia* as I have rarely enjoyed reading a latter-day English novel. The style, if severely impersonal, is sincere, direct, effective; the story is new and interesting, the central idea, the motive, being very

very daring and original indeed; and the characters are distinctly individualised. They are characters, they are human people, they are persons, they aren't mere personages, mere types. Had *Gallia* been a *roman-à-clef*, I think I could have named Dark Essex; I think I could have named Gurdon, too; I'm sure I could have named Miss Essex. As for Bobbie Leighton, little as we see of him, he is a creature of the warmest flesh and the reddest blood; and I, for my part, shall always remember him as a charming fellow whom I met once or twice, but all too infrequently, in Paris, in London, and whose present address I am very sorry not to possess. But Gallia herself I could not have named, though she is as real to me now as she could have been if I had actually known her half my life. If Miss Dowie had, in this book, accomplished nothing more than her full-length portrait of Gallia, she would have accomplished much, for a more difficult model than Gallia a portraitist could hardly have selected. Gallia—so terribly modern, so excessively unusual—a prophecy, rather than a present fact—a girl, an English girl, who *declares her love to a man*, and yet never ceases to be a fresh, innocent, modest, attractive girl, never for an instant becomes masculine, and never loses her hold upon the reader's sympathy!

A writer of fiction could scarcely propose to himself a riskier adventure than that which awaited Miss Dowie when she set out to write the chapter in which Gallia roundly informs Dark Essex that she loves him. Failure was almost a certainty; yet, so far from failing, Miss Dowie has succeeded with apparent ease. The chapter begins with a very fine and delicate observation in psychology. The blankness, the vague pain, rhythmically recurring, but for the specific cause of which Gallia has to pause a little and seek—that is very finely and delicately observed. "'I remember; there was something that has made me unhappy: what

what was it?' Thus her mind would go to work; then suddenly the sharpness of remembrance would lay hold of her nerves, and a little inarticulate cry would escape her; her hands would go up to hide her face, and a shiver, not in her limbs, but in her body, would shake and sicken her." Presently Dark Essex is shown into the room, and presently Gallia tells him that she loves him. The chapter is restrained, the chapter is dignified, the chapter is convincing, the chapter is moving;—or, rather, the chapters (for the scène is broken into two chapters, and so to break it was a prudent measure; little conventional breaks like this doing wonders to relieve the tension of the reader's emotion). It must have been difficult enough, in this crisis of the story, to make Gallia herself move and speak convincingly; it must have been a hundred times more difficult to contrive the action and the speeches of the man,—the man who found himself in so unprecedented a situation!

Gallia is a remarkable book, and Gallia is a remarkable young lady. I have no prejudices in favour of the New Woman; I proclaim myself quite brazenly an Old Male. But I respect Gallia, I admire her, I like her, and I am heartily sorry she made the mistake of marrying Gurdon. It was a mistake, I am persuaded, though an inevitable mistake. But I shall owe a grudge to Miss Ménie Muriel Dowie if she doesn't by-and-by write another volume about Gallia, and let me know exactly, in detail, how her mistaken, inevitable marriage turned out. I shall look for a volume entitled *Lady Gurdon*—for Mark will of course by this time have been created a baronet, at the lowest. And, meanwhile, I will ask competitors for my prize to be extremely careful and exhaustive in their criticisms of *Gallia*.

Two more books I will ask the same young gentlemen and ladies to consider, and then I will let them off. One is Mr. Hubert

Hubert Crackanthorpe's *Sentimental Studies*, the other Mr. George Moore's *Celibates*.

In dealing with Mr. Crackanthorpe's book, my prize-critics will kindly give attention to the actuality of his subjects, the clearness of his psychological insight, the intensity of his realisation, the convincingness of his presentation, and the sincerity and dignity of his manner. At the same time, they will point out that Mr. Crackanthorpe often says too much, that he is reluctant to leave anything to his reader's imagination, his reader's experience. He doesn't make enough allowance for his reader's native intelligence. He forgets that the golden rule in writing is simply a paraphrase of the other Golden Rule: *Write as you would be written to.* Mr. Crackanthorpe strains a little too hard, a little too visibly, for the *mot juste*. But the *mot juste* is sometimes not the best word to use. One must know what the *mot juste* is, but sometimes one should erase it and substitute the *demi-mot*. And then isn't Mr. Crackanthorpe handicapped as an artist by a trifle too much moral earnestness? Moral earnestness in life, I daresay, does more good than harm; but in Art, if present at all, it should be concealed like a vice. Mr. Crackanthorpe hardly takes pains enough to conceal his. If he won't abandon it—if he won't leave it to such writers as the author of *Trilby* and Miss Annie S. Swann—he should at least hide it under mountains of artistry.

And now for *Celibates*. *Celibates* is an important book; I'm not quite sure that *Celibates* isn't a great book, but *Celibates* is assuredly a most perplexing, a most exasperating book. How one and the same man can write as ill and as well, as execrably and as effectively, as Mr. George Moore writes, passes my comprehension. His style, for instance. His style is atrocious, and his style is almost classical. His style is like chopped straw, and his style is like architecture. In its material, in its words, phrases, sen-

 tences,

tences, his style is as bad as a Christian's style can be. It is harsh, it is slovenly, it is uncouth; fluency, melody, distinction, charm it lacks utterly; it is sometimes downright ungrammatical; it is very often common, banale, pressmanish; and yet Structurally, in its masses, it could scarcely be better. It has (as Mr. Moore would say) *line;* its drawing, its perspective, its values are the drawing, the perspective, the values of a master. It is a symmetrical temple built of soiled and broken bricks.

How could a writer who knows his Flaubert as Mr. Moore knows *his* Flaubert, speak of "sleep pressing upon Mildred's eyelids," as Mr. Moore does on page 8? What of *la phrase toute faite?* How could any one but a pressman say of his heroine that there was "a little pathetic won't-you-care-for-me expression" in her face? On page 33, Mildred Lawson looked at Ralph Hoskin "in glad surprise." On page 49 we have an epigram, a paradox: something or other "is as insignificant as life." On page 51 Ralph says, "I had to make my living ever since I was sixteen." On page 56 Mr. Moore says, "In the park they could talk without fear of being overheard, and they took interest in the changes that spring was effecting in this beautiful friendly nature." Shade of Stevenson, shade of Maupassant, what prose! On page 75: "The roadway was full of *fiacres* plying for hire, or were drawn up in lines three deep." Shade of Lindley Murray, what grammar! And on the same page: "Elsie wished that Walter would present her with a fan." It is almost enough to make one agree with the old fogey who remarked, anent *Esther Waters*, "Mr. Moore writes *about* servants, and should be read *by* them."

But no, the old fogey was wrong. Bad as Mr. Moore's style is in its materials, it is very nearly perfect in its structure; and, what's more, it's *personal.* You feel that it is a living voice, an individual's voice, that it is Mr. George Moore's voice, which is addressing

addressing you. And surely a style ought to be personal, or else style's not the man.

The question of style apart, however, what makes *Celibates* an impressive book, very nearly a great book, is its insight, its sincerity, its vividness, its sympathy. If *Mildred Lawson* were only decently written—if only some kind soul would do us a decent rendering of it into English—*Mildred Lawson* would be a story that one could speak of in the same breath with *Madame Bovary*. Yes. The assertion is startling, but the assertion is an assertion my prize-critic must boldly hazard and proceed to justify. Mildred Lawson is one of the most interesting and one of the most complex women I have ever met in fiction. Her selfishness, her weakness, her strength, her vanity, her coldness, her hundred and one qualities, traits, moods, are analysed with a minuteness that is scientific, but synthesised with a vividness that is entirely artistic, and therefore convincing, moving, memorable. *John Norton*, structurally, is not quite so faultless as *Mildred Lawson*, but it is still a very notable achievement, a very important contribution to the English fiction of our day; and I don't know whether, on the whole, *Agnes Lahens* isn't the best piece of work in the volume.

However, these are questions for my prize-critics to discuss at length—Mr. Moore's execrable, excellent style; how, as it were, one would imagine he wrote with his boot, not with his pen; his subtle lack of grace, of humour; his deep, true, sympathetic insight; his sincerity, his impressiveness; and what his place is among the four or five considerable writers of fiction now living in England.—I, sir, have already too far trespassed upon your valuable space.

I have the honour to be,
Your obedient servant,
THE YELLOW DWARF.

Two Pictures

By Stanhope A. Forbes, A.R.A.

I. Their Daily Bread

II. By the Fireside



Passion

By Richard Garnett, LL.D., C.B.

THIS flame of Passion that so high in air,
By spice and balsam of the spirit fed,
With fire and fume vast Heaven hath overspread,
And blots the stars with smoke, or dims with glare:
Soon shall it droop, and radiance pure and fair
Again from azure altitudes be shed;
And we the murky grime and embers red
Shall sift, if haply dust of Love be there.
Gather his ashes from the torrid mould,
And, quenched with drops of Bacchic revelry,
Yield to the Stygian powers to have and hold:
And urn Etrurian let his coffin be;
For this was made to store the dead and cold,
And is a thing of much fragility.

A Correspondence

By Netta Syrett

I

"I THINK she is perfectly lovely," Mrs. Yeo exclaimed, enthusiastically.

She made a slight indicative movement towards the far corner of the drawing-room, where the folds of a white dress and the feathery edges of a fan were just visible from her corner of the sofa.

"Ah, I thought you would be surprised."

Mrs. Lockyer spoke in the proprietary tone of one who has discovered some priceless treasure and for the first time displays it to the gaze of the multitude.

"They are altogether an ideal couple, aren't they?" she continued. "I always say *he* is quite ridiculously good-looking —*too* handsome for a mere man!"

"They met in Rome, you say?"

"Yes, quite lately; only a few weeks ago, in fact, when the Armstrongs were travelling in Italy. He'd hardly known her a week before he proposed, and it's scarcely a fortnight now since the day they met—so her mother says. This is his last evening. He's going back to-morrow to Rome; he has some work to finish there, I understand

I understand. He's a sculptor, you know. Such a romantic occupation, isn't it?—and so *suitable*. He has such classical features himself—just like Apollo, or, well, *all* those Greeky-Roman people. To me he has the air of being the *least* little bit stand-off. What do you think? I daresay that's just my fancy though, for I hear he is quite charming, but alarmingly clever. He is more than ten years older than Miss Armstrong, they say, and *I* believe there's more difference than that even—don't you think so?" But Mrs. Yeo's gaze had turned in the direction of the white dress again.

"She is very lovely," she repeated, "but I don't think she seems quite happy."

The girl under discussion had risen from her seat and was standing at the corner of the mantelpiece, one hand resting on the low shelf. From where Mrs. Yeo was sitting she caught a glimpse of a very delicately tinted face; the light from a rose-shaded lamp above the girl's head fell softly on masses of rippling red-brown hair growing low on the forehead, and parted over the brows, Clytie fashion. Her long trailing gown fell in white folds to her feet.

Mrs. Yeo was young and imaginative. Her friend's information about the sculptor fiancé had doubtless something to do with the fancifulness of the notion, yet, as she looked at the girl, her mind was full of vague ideas of Galatea, the beautiful statue slowly awakening to this distressful life.

"Not happy?" echoed Mrs. Lockyer. "Oh, why not? She *ought* to be. It's a most desirable match in every way. Mr. Margrave is well connected and rich, I believe; and"—this in a slightly lower key—"between ourselves, the Armstrongs are not *particularly* well off. She's a very *quiet* girl, I think; not that I know much of her. She's so very young, you know, only just out,

out, in fact. This is the first dinner they've given since her engagement, and——"

There was a sound of laughter and voices outside, and the usual little stir and flutter in the room as the men came in.

"Ah, he's speaking to her. How splendid they look together," exclaimed Mrs. Yeo, who was taking more than her usual interest in the engagement. The girl looked up with a quick start as the door opened, and hastily withdrew her foot from the fender, as though she had been guilty of some impropriety. She straightened herself, and hurriedly smoothed her dress, while her hand tightened mechanically on the fan she was holding.

A close observer might have thought the movement almost a shrinking one, and in the little fleeting smile with which she greeted her lover's approach, there was perhaps as much nervousness as pleasure.

She looked very young when she raised her eyes, which were clear blue, and at first sight, singularly childlike. But their expression was puzzling; it almost seemed—and Mrs. Yeo was more interested than ever when she noticed this—as though a new nature was struggling in them tentatively, and in a half frightened way, for life and utterance. It was this uncertain air about the girl altogether, which Mrs. Yeo felt, and which appealed to her as pathetic. "She wants some one to be *very* kind to her just now," thought the tender-hearted little lady, as she watched the girl's face.

The man lingered a few moments beside her, leaning over the back of her chair, but at the first soft notes of a song, he turned towards the piano, and in the girl's attitude there was a faint suggestion of relief, though her eyes followed him rather wistfully.

The singer was a slim girl, with a somewhat striking face, and

and a cloud of dark wavy hair. She glanced up at Margrave with a smile of thanks, as he turned over a leaf for her, and when the song was ended he kept his place at her side. She did not move from the piano, but began to look over a pile of music as though searching for something.

There was a short silence.

"Cecily is lovelier than ever to-night," she observed, abruptly.

Margrave smiled and glanced in the direction she was looking.

"Yes," he assented. "That Greek dress of hers is quite an inspiration."

The girl—her name was Gretchen Verrol—bent to pick up a stray leaf before she replied. "Thank you; don't trouble," she said; then, "You are praising *me* unawares," she added.

"You designed it then?"

"And more, I made it, with these my proper hands," with a little gesture.

"I honour you equally for your inventive and creative faculties," he returned laughingly.

After a moment, with a sudden change of tone, "Cecily is very fortunate in having you with her," he said. "You read with her, I think? She is very young," and then he hesitated a little, "I have seen so little of her, and scarcely ever alone, but I fancy she needs——" he paused.

"She is beautiful enough to need nothing besides," Gretchen interrupted hastily. "Why don't you go and talk to her now? She is by herself, and I'm not her governess quite, Mr. Margrave," she added.

A young man came up to the piano at the moment, and she held out a piece of music to him. "Here is a song I know you sing, Mr. Graham! Shall I play it for you?" she asked almost in the same breath.

Margrave

Margrave looked at her a moment with an expression which was at first perplexed, and also a trifle disconcerted before he obediently went back to Cecily.

II

Five years difference in the ages of two girls is not too much to admit the possibility of intimate friendship. Not that this was the term which could, with any appropriateness, describe the relation between Cecily and Gretchen Verrol, though they were constantly together, and though Gretchen, and all that she did, occupied, or at any rate till quite recently had occupied, nearly the whole of Cecily's mental horizon.

Gretchen Verrol was a distant cousin of Mrs. Armstrong, for whom circumstances had rendered it unavoidable to do something in the way of help.

Most fortunately, both for herself and for the Armstrongs, it happened that Gretchen was clever and accomplished—"the very companion we could have chosen for our dear Cecily," as her mother frequently observed. This being the case, matters were easily arranged, and for a year previous to Cecily's engagement, Miss Verrol had lived with the Armstrongs, "reading" with Cecily, helping her with her music, and generally "forming her taste," as Mrs. Armstrong again frequently, if somewhat vaguely, remarked.

Mrs. Armstrong was a slightly vague person altogether, but kindly-natured and easy-going. Her one positive emotion being admiration for her young cousin, who soon held a very important, if not the most important, position in the household.

Whether her engagement had done anything towards lessening the exalted opinion of Gretchen which Cecily shared with her mother was a doubtful question.

"Do

"Do you like that Miss Verrol?" some one asked her once rather dubiously, and Cecily looked at her interrogator in a startled, half-awed fashion.

"She is so clever, you know," she replied, irrelevantly as it seemed, glancing furtively behind her as she spoke.

Gretchen was still an object of as much wondering reverence to Cecily a year afterwards as she had been during the first week of their acquaintance, when Miss Verrol had already summed up her impressions of the latter, once and for all.

She practically knew Cecily, as she remarked to herself, after the first day, and at the end of the first week she proceeded to recapitulate and to get her by heart. An easy task! So easy that she had to sit and look at her with an air of critical wonder.

They were reading German. That is, Gretchen was. She had been pronouncing the words with great distinctness, and Cecily, with laborious effort after imitation, had made strange and weird sounds, unlike any language that was ever imagined, far less spoken. Presently Gretchen's voice stopped, and it was then that Cecily began to move restlessly, raising apprehensive eyes to those which her companion bent quietly upon her. The silence became a little oppressive; Cecily fidgeted, dropped her eyes, and began to pull the blotting-paper to pieces with nervous fingers. Gretchen laid a hand upon it, and quietly drew it away.

"It is no good for you to read this," said Miss Verrol at last, calmly.

"No," meekly assented Cecily.

"We've tried French—you don't seem to understand anything of that."

"No," she repeatedly hopelessly.

"Tell me—you don't really care for music, reading, poetry, pictures, do you?"

This

This was practically an assertion, though put in the form of a question. Cecily felt compelled to reply.

"No," she acknowledged again, faintly.

Gretchen continued to look at her.

"It is very curious," she remarked critically, as though she had come upon a totally new species and was interested.

Cecily suddenly dropped her fair head upon her arms, and burst into tears.

Miss Verrol waited silently till the storm was passed. There was a glass opposite, and she looked across at it as the girl raised her tear-stained face.

"It doesn't matter," she said in the same critical tone. "You are pretty enough to make it of no consequence. You even look pretty when you cry. Now, *I* look hideous."

This was the first and only spoken allusion to Cecily's mental deficiencies that Gretchen ever made. The reading and music practising went on regularly as usual, and Cecily still persevered in her frantic attempts at the German accent. If there was the slightest trace of weariness in Gretchen's tone as she corrected her for the fourth or fifth time in one word, it was so faint as to be only just appreciable, and when at the end of the hour Cecily stole an apprehensive glance at her face, it was always calm and imperturbable.

"Now we will have the duet," was what she usually said as she closed the book. Indeed, her patience during the hours devoted to "mental culture" was altogether admirable, and if signs of Cecily's lack of intelligence had been otherwise wanting, they would have been supplied by the fact that, while humbly recognising the goodness and wisdom of Gretchen, and striving earnestly to be worthy of it, she would yet have found it a relief if the latter had *sometimes* lost her temper.

This

This absence of impatience or reproach paralysed her. Once when Gretchen had been called away in the middle of the duet, she sat vacantly staring at the keys for a moment.

All at once, with a sudden frantic movement, she half rose from her seat at the piano, a look of positive terror in her eyes.

"If only she would say something—*anything!* I can't *breathe* when she looks at me," she panted breathlessly.

When Gretchen came back she was patiently practising a bar over and over again.

"Try it once more, Cecily," Gretchen said, gazing straight before her out of the window. "It isn't right."

Mrs. Armstrong found her cousin really invaluable. She was as clever with her fingers as with her brains, and when Cecily began to go out, she not only designed, but also made most of her charming gowns for evening wear.

She always helped her to dress for dances—dressed her, in fact—for Cecily generally stood quite passive to have her hair arranged, her flowers fastened in, or the folds of her gown artistically draped.

On these occasions Gretchen never failed to praise her beauty openly and with an air of impartial criticism, and then Cecily winced and trembled a little, but said nothing.

"I have a comfortable home, but I earn my living," wrote Gretchen to a friend, when she had been with the Armstrongs about three months.

It was with real concern that a day or two after her daughter's engagement had been finally arranged Mrs. Armstrong learnt that Gretchen was thinking of leaving her.

"Cecily will be broken-hearted," she exclaimed plaintively; "and she won't be married just yet, you know. Besides, why should you go at all? I shall want you more than ever then."

But Gretchen was firm.

"As

"As long as I could be really of use to you, with Cecily, I did not feel myself dependent," she explained. "But now it will be different. No, Cousin Mary, that is only your kindness. I should not be happy in staying on."

And Cousin Mary, though demurring, felt it selfish to stand in the way of the girl's prospects, especially as an acquaintance of hers, who was about to sail for New Zealand and wanted a governess, was overjoyed at securing such a charming person as Miss Verrol for her two girls.

"But I'm sure I don't know how to tell Cecily," she lamented again and again. "I don't know how she'll take it."

Cecily took it with a start, and an expression not easy to read.

"But she's such a strange girl," complained her mother, who was not given to analysis of character to any great extent.

III

Gretchen's departure had been finally arranged only the day before Margrave's return to Rome. He could hardly hope to finish the work he was engaged upon very speedily; it would probably be at least six months before he met Cecily again, and his complaint of having seen very little of her during his brief visit was by no means unfounded. It was difficult to tell how deeply the girl felt his absence. Perhaps her manner was even quieter and more subdued than usual, but that was the only noticeable difference in her behaviour. She very rarely mentioned his name.

There was a letter lying beside her plate on the breakfast table the morning after her lover's departure, and Gretchen, glancing across from her opposite seat, saw her quickly cover it with her hand,

hand, which she withdrew, a second after, in confusion. Her mother laughed.

"You are not going to read it now, then, Cecie?"

"No, mother," she replied, flushing hotly.

An hour or two later, Gretchen opened the door of Cecily's bedroom. She was pre-occupied, and entered without knocking; indeed, she had taken the dress she had come for out of the wardrobe, and was leaving the room before she noticed that Cecily was there.

The girl sat in the corner of the window seat, trying to turn her head so as to hide that she was crying—an open letter lay on her lap.

Gretchen started. Instinctively her hand groped for the back of a chair she was passing; then she drew it away, and straightened herself.

"What is the matter, Cecily?" she asked—her voice sounded a little strained, but it was calm enough. "You have not"—she paused—"there is no bad news?"

Cecily's low sobs choked her voice. There was time for Gretchen to glance at her own face in the glass and to turn back to the light, before she replied.

"N—no," she said at last; "but——" Gretchen crossed to her side.

"Won't you tell me?" she asked. There was a little tremble in her tone now. Cecily heard it, and looked up gratefully. Gretchen seemed sorry.

"I don't like to," she murmured. "You'll say—oh, it's too silly!" Her voice broke again in a half sob.

"Never mind. Tell me."

"Only that—only—because—because I shall have to answer it."

The confession broke from Cecily's lips hesitatingly, and then she laid one arm hopelessly against the window frame, and hid her wet eyes against it.

Gretchen did not speak for a minute.

"The letter, you mean?" she asked at length, quietly. "Well —there is nothing so dreadful about that, is there?"

"Oh, yes, there is—yes, there *is*—for *me!*" wailed Cecily. "You may read it." She held out the letter, looking up at Gretchen despairingly. "You'll see. He asks what I thought of some of those statues in Rome—and—and the pictures. And —I didn't think anything. Oh, Gretchen! I know I'm very stupid—but—I had no thoughts about them, except—I wondered why they kept broken statues in such grand places. But I can't tell him that, can I? because people, clever people, think they are beautiful—without noses—or anything. And all that he says about the scenery—and you know what my spelling is like—and oh, Gretchen! Don't—don't smile like that!"

Cecily shrank back into the corner of the window seat, and covered her face with both hands. Perhaps she had never made such a long speech before—but Gretchen had seemed sorry.

There was quite a long silence. The crisp paper crackled as Miss Verrol turned the sheets; still Cecily did not look up.

"Well, do you want me to answer it for you?" The question was accompanied by a short laugh.

The girl's hands dropped from her face in a second, and her eyes sought Gretchen's inquiringly—incredulously.

"Gretchen—do you mean it? Would you? Not really?"

"Where is that silk gauze of yours?" asked Gretchen, crossing the room and stooping over a drawer.

"In that box," replied Cecily, sighing—the chance of relief was gone then.

You

"You see," pursued Gretchen, still turning over things in the drawer, "it's not quite the same thing as doing your exercises."

"No," agreed Cecily, despondently. Then brightening, "But, Gretchen—if you would—you are so clever. You know all about those statues—and the pictures—and the palaces. You could write about them." She paused breathlessly.

"Oh, yes," replied Miss Verrol carelessly. "I dare say I could—I was considered good at composition—at school. Our relative positions would be somewhat reversed, wouldn't they? I should have to bring these exercises to you, for correction and amendment, and—naturally you are so much better up in the subject."

Another pause.

"No, I really don't think I should dare to let you see my work. There would be so many faults."

She had found the scarf now, and was busy smoothing out its creases.

"You have crushed this dreadfully," she said, reproachfully.

"Oh, you don't think it's important enough to talk about," cried Cecily desperately; "but I can *never* do it alone. Can't you help me? I shouldn't want to see the letters you wrote, you know," she assured her eagerly. "So——"

Gretchen stopped short in the midst of shaking out the filmy folds.

"Not—you mean you would not want to see the letters *I* wrote to *your* lover?" she asked incredulously, fixing her eyes on the girl's face.

Cecily blushed painfully.

"No," she hesitated. "Not if you'd rather not. I know it is easier to do everything—if—if people are not watching you. And you will do all the important part, about the statues, beauti-

fully, Gretchen. The only thing I could do would be to—to send my love." Her voice faltered. "Perhaps you wouldn't mind always putting that in, at the end, after the other things, you know?"

"Yes. What am I to say?"

"Just say "—the colour flamed in her cheeks again—"I love you, Noel." She turned her head away sharply, and looked out of the window.

Gretchen still stood beside her, motionless.

"Cecily," she said at last, in a low voice, "think—do you *really* want me to do this? I won't if you——"

"Yes," she answered brokenly. "If I could do it myself, of course I—I would rather—but I *can't!* And after all, it won't matter so very much, will it, Gretchen?" She turned to her like a child, imploring to be reassured by some wise and grown-up person. "I shall *mean* all the things you say."

"What about the handwriting?" asked Gretchen. Her voice sounded flat and wearied. "Has he seen yours?"

"No. I have never written to him. There has been no occasion, you see, and he doesn't know yours."

Miss Verrol went to the door. As she reached it, she paused with her hand on the lock.

"Remember, you wish it," she said, turning her head over her shoulder to look at Cecily.

The girl rose from the window seat and came towards her. Her soft hair was all disordered, her cheeks were flushed, and her pretty blue eyes were still wet.

"Yes; you are very good to me, Gretchen," she began timidly, putting out her arms. But Gretchen shrank away hastily. "Mind—you will crumple this again," she said.

IV

Thus it happened that regularly every week a letter went to Rome, beginning, at Cecily's request (her own original contribution), "My dearest Noel," and ending with "your very loving Cecily." The girl who wrote the letters sat up far into the night. Not that she was writing all the time. She read and re-read sheets of close writing on thin foreign paper. Every time she came to an endearing word her colour came and went, and she drew in her breath quickly. To be accurate, the words of love were not many. The letters were perhaps a trifle wanting in colour for a lover. They were the letters of a clever, cultivated man, a little cold by nature. Perhaps *too* highly polished. But the reader did not criticise. She changed colour when she read "my love;" she smiled triumphantly when he said how it gratified him to know that in their tastes and feelings they were so fully in sympathy. He had not been quite sure of this, he wrote—she had been so silent, so shy—and he had had to learn from her letters that he should have a wife as clever as she was beautiful. Once when she read words to this effect, Gretchen crumpled the paper fiercely in her hand, and sprang to her feet. With a smile of self-mockery, she went to the glass and deliberately studied herself. It reflected a little thin figure, with large, glittering eyes, irregular features, and a mass of rough, wavy hair. A somewhat striking apparition—picturesque, perhaps. But beautiful? A vision of Cecily's stately white loveliness swam before her eyes, and she turned away impatiently.

But the letter must be answered, and she sat down to her weekly task—a torture which she would not now forego if Cecily begged it of her on her bended knees.

She

She knew that Cecily already repented of her request. Every time she handed Gretchen a letter from her lover, it was with a more reluctant action, a more wistful and appealing look.

She saw, but would not heed. Cecily had decided—the act was hers—let her abide by it!

In the meantime, every week she could write, with white lips and shaking hand, "I love you, Noel." Had not Cecily herself wished it?

"Madness! Of course, I know that," she thought; "but if I like to be mad just once before I go away to live out my dull, highly respectable life, who is there to hinder me? It's an inexpensive luxury. She'll tell him, of course, when they're married—though there'll be no occasion; he'll find it out quickly enough." She smiled scornfully. "But what does that matter? I shall be thousands of miles away by that time. I shall never know how he takes it, or what he thinks." And then she sealed the letter.

Even then, though it was early morning, she sat a long time at the table, quite still, her face buried in her hands. When she looked up, it was drawn and haggard.

"And I've come to be a thing like this," she whispered, with a slow self-scorn, "about a man who has forgotten my existence. And—I am Gretchen Verrol!"

V

As time went on, drawing nearer to the expiration of the three months before her cousin's departure, Mrs. Armstrong's lamentations became more and more frequent.

"Cecily, poor child, feels it dreadfully," she repeated. "She is

is really getting quite thin, and I think she looks ill, though her father says it's like my fidgetiness! But I don't care; she shall take a tonic in spite of what he says. I don't like the look of her at all sometimes. She has such a—I hardly know how to explain what I mean—such a curious, frightened expression. Have you noticed it? You know, Gretchen" (confidentially), "in spite of a mother's natural feelings, and all that, I shall be glad to have her married. For my part, I don't approve of long engagements, but her father is so obstinate. The child feels unsettled, so of course she's miserable. I expect she misses Noel too, don't you? But she says so little, I hardly know *what* to think."

There was no doubt that Cecily was growing thin. Her eyes were unnaturally large and bright; they had a wistful, troubled look, and lately she had taken to starting nervously when any one spoke suddenly to her. Her mother talked of taking her away somewhere for change of air, as soon as Miss Verrol had gone.

"And I hope the voyage will do you good, too," she added, looking at Gretchen critically. "Do you know you are looking quite ill? Bless these young people, there's always something the matter with them now. I'm sure there never used to be, in *my* young days."

The last day at the Armstrongs, after all her boxes were ready, Gretchen spent in paying farewell calls.

It was quite late in the afternoon before, the last good-bye said, and the last polite good wish for her happiness expressed, she found herself once more in front of the house she was so soon to leave. It was some moments before the door was opened in answer to her ring, and she stood on the top of the flight of steps and looked drearily up and down the street. It was a wet night—the pavements were all shining with rain, the gas lamps were reflected waveringly in the puddles on the road. Only one person was in sight

sight—a girl in a long shiny waterproof, picking her way carefully through the mud from one pavement to the other. The rain dripped steadily, drearily from the square portico overhead.

Gretchen shivered as she looked.

The door was opened and she stepped into the dazzle of the brightly lighted hall, and began to take off her wet cloak. When the bright mist cleared, she saw that there was a portmanteau on the oak chest against the wall; a bundle of rugs lay beside it; from the drawing-room came a distant murmur of voices.

"Has any one come, then, Price?" asked Gretchen, stopping at the last button of her waterproof.

"Yes, miss; Mr. Margrave. He came unexpected, about two hours ago. I don't know why James hasn't taken up his things, I'm sure. I've told him to, times enough." Gretchen put her cloak into the maid's hands and turned to the stairs.

"Will you have some tea, miss?"

"No, thank you," she answered quietly.

Upstairs, the door of Cecily's room stood half-open. She was dressed for dinner already, and she stood before the fire, the tips of her fingers touching the mantelpiece, her forehead resting upon them.

Gretchen hesitated a moment, then went in. "This is a delightful surprise for you, Cecily, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Cecily starting. She had raised her head quickly when she heard Gretchen's step, but she did not turn round.

Gretchen stood looking at her with an indescribable expression.

"Why did he come?" she asked after a moment.

"He has been working too hard. The doctor said he was to rest a little, and take a holiday. So he made up his mind suddenly to come and see us. He wrote, but the letter hasn't come

come yet. We got a telegram just after you went out, about half-an-hour before he came."

Something in her voice, though she had not listened to what she said, struck Gretchen as strange.

In spite of herself. "You don't seem very glad, Cecily? You don't speak quite in the style of the orthodox engaged young lady," she said, laughing a little as she drew nearer the fire.

"I am *not* engaged," murmured Cecily.

"*What!*" Gretchen put her hand on the corner of the mantelpiece to steady herself. "What are you saying? What do you mean?"

Cecily turned a pair of frightened eyes towards her. Gretchen was going to be angry. "I—I have broken it off," she whispered in a scared way.

"Since when?"

"Since he came here this afternoon."

Gretchen broke into a shrill laugh. "What a charming reception!" she cried.

Then she recovered herself. "Tell me about it!" she exclaimed peremptorily.

Cecily glanced round the room despairingly, then at Gretchen, who had taken a low chair by the fire and was waiting with a pale face and that patient air she knew so well. There was no escape. "May I shut the door?" she said meekly crossing the room, her white dress trailing, a tall stately figure in spite of her girlishness.

She came back to her place, but did not speak.

"Well?" said Gretchen.

"I don't know what you want me to tell you."

"Why you broke it off."

There was another long pause, then Cecily began to speak low and rapidly.

"I shall

"I shall never make you understand," she cried hopelessly. "I didn't mean to do it, to-day. I—I didn't even know that I had made up my mind to do it at all—till just as I was going into the drawing-room to see him. Then I seemed to see that it was all no use." Her voice sank to a whisper; she was trembling from head to foot.

"You musn't cry. You have to go down, remember," Gretchen observed in even tones.

Cecily drew herself up, "What more shall I tell you?" she cried passionately.

Gretchen had never heard this tone from her before; it startled her. She too rose, and they stood facing one another.

"Why do you ask me?" panted Cecily. "You know—but if you like I will tell you. I don't mind now. Nothing matters now. I knew almost from the first that I could not marry him. He is so clever. And I—every moment I was afraid he would ask me something I didn't know. I didn't understand the way he talked. I didn't understand half of what he said to me. I should *never* have understood it;" she wailed, "I was always afraid when he came to talk to me, and yet when he was away——" She checked herself. All the passion had died out of her tone now. "If I hadn't known it before, his letters would have shown me. Oh, I did very wrong in asking you to write, Gretchen. I knew it, the first time he answered *your* letter, and praised what he thought I'd said."

Gretchen suddenly caught her breath. "You never——" she began.

"No, I was afraid to ask you not to go on with it when you'd been so kind, and taken so much trouble," Cecily said. "I see myself very plainly to-night. Just as though I was some one else—I see that besides—other things—I am a coward."

Gretchen

Gretchen was silent.

"He would not listen at first." It seemed that having begun her confession she *must* speak now, though the words came falteringly from her trembling lips. "He said he didn't understand —he said there was no reason—I was playing with him. He spoke of my letters." She paused.

"Well?" gasped Gretchen breathlessly.

"Then I thought at any rate I would not deceive him any longer—it was no good—so I told him you wrote them. Gretchen !—*don't !* you—you frighten me !" she whispered hoarsely.

Gretchen had seized her by the wrist. Her eyes were burning in a face as white as death ; they seemed to scorch the girl cowering down before her.

"*You little fool !*" she exclaimed, her hands dropping heavily at her sides. Each word stung like the sharp point of an icicle.

Cecily staggered back as though she had been struck.

It was out at last ! This was what Gretchen had been feeling about her every minute for a whole year. The words expressed her whole attitude towards her ; it was what Cecily had all the time dumbly wished, yet dreaded to hear her say. It was almost a relief —but she was dazed and confused—she did not yet understand what had forced the words, what had impelled Gretchen, at last, to give her spoken verdict. She still gazed at her bewildered, hopeless.

"What did he think of me?" inquired Gretchen mockingly. Her tone was so careless and airy that Cecily half doubted for the moment whether she could have said those words in *that voice* a second before—then she looked again at her face, and knew that her ears had not deceived her.

She stood for a second with parted lips, and then a great fear crept up into her eyes, as she covered her face with both hands.

"Forgive

"Forgive me, Gretchen!" she murmured. "You—you—know how stupid I am."

It seemed a long time before Gretchen spoke. "I shall not come down to-night," she answered calmly. "It might complicate matters perhaps. Say I have a headache, please. I shall arrange to go by the first train to-morrow. If you think you can invent any reason for this to Cousin Mary, it might be just as well. If not—it doesn't matter much."

Cecily stood motionless till the door had opened, closed again, and the room was empty.

Then with a helpless movement, she sank down on the floor before the fire, her fair head buried in the cushions of the easy chair, to stifle her sobs.

"I can't think about Gretchen. I can't think about any one but him," she whispered to herself brokenly. "What shall I do? I didn't make myself. It isn't fair. I should have been wretched if I'd ever been his wife. He would have been ashamed of me. And yet—yet!"

Presently she rose wearily; she poured out water and bathed her eyes, and then arranged her hair carefully before the glass.

In a few minutes, except that she was terribly pale, all traces of violent grief had vanished.

Yet to herself she looked so strange that she shuddered to see her own reflection in the glass, there was something about it that was so changed.

When she turned away, it seemed as though a mask had fallen upon a trembling living face. The gong sounded, and she went quietly downstairs; it was not till the next morning that her mother knew that the engagement was at an end.

* * * * *

Mrs. Yeo had come up to town from her country house, on her

her usual spring visit, which was always devoted to shopping and incidental frivolities. She was at the theatre with her husband one evening. The house was full, and between the acts she leant forward on the red velvet cushion before her seat in the dress circle and inspected the stalls with a view to seeing how the hair was being worn this season, and whether the sleeves in the new dinner-dress she had ordered were *too* outrageous. The buzz of talk and the tuneful wail of the violins fell pleasantly on her ears, as she scanned the rows of backs for a possible acquaintance.

"There's a beautiful woman. In the second box—look," her husband turned to her to say, lowering his glasses. "Do you see? In white—next to a good-looking fellow with a priggish nose."

"Why, it's Mrs. Margrave!" she exclaimed in surprise, after a moment's scrutiny. "Yes, isn't she *lovely?* And—yes, that wretched woman's there too," she added with a change of tone.

"Mrs. Margrave?" he repeated.

"Yes. You know, Jim. Cecily Armstrong. We dined at the Armstrongs' once, two or three years ago, don't you remember? I thought her beautiful then. Fancy seeing her here to-night. It must be quite two years since we met her. I wonder if she would recognise me?"

"She married that fellow, then? I had some idea it was all off?"

"So it was for a time. There was some mysterious fuss, don't you remember? But Mrs. Armstrong worked it. Cecily always did what she was told. I don't believe the poor child was even consulted. Look!" she broke off to exclaim indignantly. "He isn't paying her the smallest attention. He talks all the time to that horrid Miss Verrol. I *always* disliked her."

Mrs. Margrave was leaning back listlessly in her chair. Her fan

fan lay upon her lap. She was apparently gazing straight before her, though her masses of rippling hair partly concealed her face from the Yeos.

"Who is she?"

"Why, you remember. That Miss Verrol who used to be Cecily's companion."

"I thought she went to America, or New Zealand, or somewhere?"

"So she did, but Lady Fairfield had to come home when her father died, you know, and she brought Miss Verrol with her. I believe she's living in town with them now as governess, or secretary, or something; but she's always at the Margraves', I hear." Mrs. Yeo gave vent to an untranslatable little exclamation of disgust.

"But why?" asked her husband. He alluded to the ejaculation.

"My dear Jim! Can't you *see?* Look at them!"

The lights were lowered at the moment, and the curtain rose on the last act.

When it was over, and Mrs. Yeo had collected her wraps, she turned to glance once more at the Margraves' box, but it was empty.

Down in the brightly lighted vestibule, however, when at length they reached it, she saw Cecily again.

She was standing a little out of the crush, beside one of the great doors. Her husband was wrapping a white cloak round Miss Verrol. She said something to him, with an upward glance as he did so, and they both laughed. Cecily, who stood patiently waiting at her side, shivered a little at the moment, yet Mrs. Yeo fancied she did not feel the cold. As she passed her in the doorway, their eyes met.

For

For a moment there was no recognition in the long wistful gaze which Cecily unconsciously fixed upon her; then, all at once, she bent her head and smiled.

The crowd swept them apart, and in a few minutes Mrs. Yeo was being whirled towards the Métropole in a hansom.

"You're very quiet," her husband remarked presently. "Didn't you enjoy the play?"

She put her hand on his, impulsively, and, as she turned to him, he saw there were tears in her eyes.

"You didn't notice her face, Jim, as we passed? I did. I shall never forget it. Poor girl! Poor child!"

Two Pictures

By T. C. Gotch

I. Blue Hills Mine

II. Charcoal Study



Under Grey Skies

By S. Cornish Watkins

UNDER grey skies we stood that night,
We two, and saw, below us there,
The city twinkling light on light.
Behind, the long road glimmered bare
'Twixt shadowy hedges, faint and white,
And heavy hung the silent air.

Dimly I saw the fair pale face
Uplifted, like a slender flower
In some forgotten garden-place,
That, at the solemn twilight hour,
Through leaves that cross and interlace,
Craves from the night her dewy dower.

And all my heart went out to thine,
And the lips trembled, as to show
The fire of love that might not shine;
For, through the glamour and the glow,
I felt the clear eyes turned on mine,
That knew not love, and could not know.

Under grey skies I stand again,
 And far beneath me, down the hill,
The gas-lamps glimmer through the rain.
 As it was then, the night is chill,
And no one knows the secret pain
 That holds the sad heart lonely still.

Two Hours : Two Women

By Susan Christian

BETWEEN the Cotswold hills and the Severn river lies a widely-spreading town, with innumerable church spires rising from the midst of its glistening rows of white stucco villas and unimposing terraces. The more "fashionable" parts of this town are, in August, a great opportunity for the study of window-blinds, for at the end of July one house after another looks down on an agitation of departure in front of its door, and then seems with fatigued relief to drop its faded eyelids and bask tranquilly in the hot silence. In a month or six weeks' time its pleasurable torpor will be rudely disturbed by rattling brooms and buckets, and then, with its stair carpets in new creases and its window-boxes run to seed, it will stand ready to endure for another spell the life that will presently pour back into it.

Number 50, however, was not entirely deserted ; it was completely noiseless, but the front door was open and the gas was alight in the dining-room. On the stairs, at the top of the second landing, there was sitting in the dusk a very tiny boy in his night-shirt ; his small arms were clasped tightly round his spare knees, and his little outstretched ears had the funny aspect of being "cocked" like those of a terrier ; he was tensely listening to the profound stillness.

He had tossed about in his bed, and then left it, for it was too hot to go to sleep. He had no idea the house was so tall as it seemed to-night; the downward aspect from the very top landing was abysmal. He crept down; and down again a little further; no stair-board creaked beneath his elfin footfall.

A rudimentary spirit of adventure which attended his setting-out had been quenched; he called a halt; he was certainly a little frightened. Poking his head through the bannisters, he could see in the passage below a streak of light, which lay across it from the dining-room door ajar; but there was no sound. Intangible fears rocked his diminutive soul, his nervous fingers were tightly interlaced, he was heroically nerving himself to meet calamity.

It was a long, long time; but at last there came the noise of chair legs scraping over a Brussels carpet.

His grown-up sister, then, was still alive, and presumably safe, for presently there floated up to him, a little out of tune, a few bars of a then fashionable song.

He moved down another flight of stairs, with an apprehension that she perhaps was feeling solitary. She had begun to work the sewing-machine, and its dull whirling, which seems always laden with the weariness of a thousand women's lives, was a harsh accompaniment to his tragic thoughts.

A little dread was mixed with his admiration for his grown-up sister. She was so upright and trim, the colour in her cheeks was clear and bright, and there was a dimple in her chin; but her grey eyes always smiled above and beyond, and not at him, and this never quite compensated for her indulgence at teatime, when she would sometimes only laugh when she saw him surreptitiously eating the forbidden combination of butter and jam. Even in after-life he only partially realised what an entire sacrifice his sister's life had been to him and to his elder brothers. If the slender

slender education and narrow opportunities of small means, inevitably, as years went on, contracted her mind to a degree woefully incomprehensible to the brothers for whom she had thus helped to make a wider life possible, we may be consoled to think that she could successfully, for her part, bridge over the chasm which lay between them by cheerful pride in their success. A certain brisk cheerfulness was certainly the pivot of her life; there was neither self-consciousness nor wistfulness about her immolation. She bent now as spiritedly over the machine as in the morning hours, not sensitive to the incongruity of her employment with the magic of the summer twilight.

Alas! she was not sensitive. She never quite understood. It was one of the impossibilities of existence that any spiritual suspicion should acquaint her of the little figure outside on the stairs in the dark, with slow tears creeping down his cheeks.

For he was silently crying.

He was so very, very lonely, and there was no one in the world who would come to him.

In future years a very strong sense of the ridiculous could never make him smile at the remembrance of that hour, for he recognised that, as he had at length gulped back his childish tears into his aching throat, and sat on immovably in the gathering darkness, he had there, timorously, but for evermore, set his feet in the path that alone leads beyond sorrow; the path—how shall we call it?—of accepted loneliness of soul.

It was not long ago that, after an interval of many years, he walked once again through those streets, and past his childhood's home in the tall terrace. It must have been preconcerted that there should be standing on the very steps just such another tiny boy as he himself had once been, in the immaculately clean collar and

and red-and-white hat ribbon of the well-known school, which, though it has long changed hands, still retains these distinguishing marks. He passed by with a smile to visit other haunts, and it is improbable that any one noticed him. He is a small man, as he had been a small boy, and it must be confessed that his neckties are not as piquant as they should be, and that he has no right feeling on the question of boots. An insignificant figure perhaps, but a face with a loveliness of its own, insensibly bringing back some far, faint, fair sensation, as the clear singing of birds at dawn in the stunted trees which border the silent streets of a great city.

It is impossible to trace the causes which have given him, without any very obvious genius on his part, the position he holds in the world of to-day; where his friends sometimes realise that he is more to them than they can ever be to him.

He possesses one of those old-world houses in James Street, Buckingham Gate, which look over the end of Wellington Barracks Square towards the Mall and the Green Park. It was late in an afternoon towards the end of July, and there were several people in the little drawing-rooms with their modelled plaster ceilings. A very young girl in a crisp muslin dress stood at a window in the front room, looking down on a number of Guardsmen playing cricket beyond the tall iron railings and the row of dusty plane-trees. There was an undulation of bonnets and low-pitched voices behind her, and at a piano in the innermost room, which was much darker, and where conversation had stilled, there sat a young man, reciting with unrivalled art:

"Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O death in life, the days that are no more"

and,

and, adding to the pathos of the words, music which alone seemed as if it must light up the flame of romance in cold or old burnt-out hearts, but which roused no appreciable emotion—only a little tepid applause.

People were beginning to go away, and well-known men and women passed down the twisted oak staircase. The fragile-looking young man who had recited remained to the last, and, talking with him, a slender woman, whose dark auburn hair was just slightly turning grey. Her host went with her downstairs, and across the pavement to her carriage.

"When do you leave town?" he said. "You are looking completely done up."

"Ah, well, it will be soon," she answered. "And you?"

"I shall turn up again with the swallows."

It was characteristic of him that he never directly answered questions about himself.

They were holding one another's hands above the closed door of the tall barouche. The sunset, which was making splendid the tree-tops in the Green Park, illumined for them each other's pale face. It was the highest tribute that was ever paid him, that she, a very proud woman, did not mind that he should know she had always loved him.

They had built between each other with respectful hands a wall of silence, across which her eyes had long learnt not to wander, but he saw to-night once more in the brown depths which it was the vogue to call "cold," the gleam of bitter emotion.

He quietly withdrew his hand, and for the first time in their long acquaintanceship she felt for him a slight contempt.

It was an ironical moment.

She wished him to know that in quite a short time she was to die, and that this was truly a last good-bye.

A bugle

A bugle was sounding at the other end of the barrack square; people passed along the pavement where the tall footman stood immovable; the innumerable windows in the row of houses gazed down unblinkingly. It all seemed to her so detached, so far away, unreal; and he the greatest unreality.

She did not look at him again, but signalled to the footman, and bent her head as the horses sprang forward. She was not to be unenvied. Her last disappointment on earth was over as she went swiftly up the Buckingham Palace Road.

For himself, he returned to his dishevelled rooms, and, teased by some vague half-misgiving, stood a few moments beside the open piano, tapping gently with his fingers on the mirror-like wood before sitting down to play.

Ah! the inexplicable incapacities or the human soul!

Yet here, under his moving hands, was music—such music; perfect expression of immortal pain, immortal love.

Seascape

By Percy R. Craft

Sic tu recoli merearis !

By A. C. Benson

O soul, my soul, before thou com'st to die,
Set one deep mark upon the face of time,
Let one absorbing laughter, one grave rhyme
Ring in the heedless wind that hurries by.

Yon smooth-limbed beech, that hangs upon the slope
With branching spray, with firm and shapely arm,
Hath, could'st thou write it, a bewildering charm
Would gild thy name beyond thy utmost hope !

O soul, my soul, be true, laborious, just,—
And some chance word, some penetrating smile,
Flashed with no purpose, no impulsive aim,
Shall live, and breed strong thoughts, when thou art dust ;
And mount, and gather strength, and roll in flame
Beyond the utmost Orient's utmost isle !

The Iniquity of Oblivion

By Kenneth Grahame

A MAN I know is fond of asking the irritating question—and in putting it he regards neither age nor sex, neither ancient friendship nor the rawest nodding acquaintance—"Did you ever forget an invitation to dinner?"

Of course the denial is prompt, passionate, and invariable. There are few crimes of which one would not rather be accused than this. He who cannot summon up the faintest blush at the recollection of having once said "Season," when no money had passed between him and the Railway Company whose guest he was for the moment—of having under-stated his income for purposes of taxation—or of having told his wife he was going to church, and then furtively picked up a fishing-rod as he passed through the hall—will colour angrily at the most innocent suggestion of a single possible lapse of memory regarding an invitation to dinner. But, none the less, every one finds it a little difficult to meet the natural rejoinder: "How do you know?"

Indeed, no other reply but painful silence is possible. To say, "Because I do," is natural enough, and frequently quite conclusive of further argument; still, it can hardly be called a reasoned refutation. The fact is, you *don't* know, and you cannot know. Your conviction that you do is based, first, on some sort of idea that

that you are bound to recollect, sooner or later, anything that you may have forgotten: an argument that only requires to be stated to display its fallacy; secondly, on a vague belief that a defection of so flagrant a character must inevitably be brought home to you by an incensed host or hostess—a theory that makes no allowance for the blissful sense of injury and offended pride, the joy of brooding over a wrong, which is one of the chief pleasures left to humanity. No: one doesn't know, and one can't know: and the past career of the most self-satisfied of us is doubtless littered with the débris of forgotten invitations.

Of course invitations, being but a small part of life, and not—as some would imply by their practice—its chief end, must be taken to stand here for much besides. One has only to think of the appalling amount of book-lore one has "crammed" in days gone by, and of the pitiful fragments that survive, to realise that facts, deeds, achievements, experiences numberless, may just as well have been hurried along the dusty track to oblivion. And once it has been fairly brought home to us that we have entirely forgotten any one thing—why, the gate is open. It is clear we may just as easily have forgotten hundreds.

This lamentable position of things was specially forced upon me, some time ago, by a certain persistent dream that used to wing its way to my bedside, not once or twice, but coming a dozen times, and always (I felt sure at the time) from out the Ivory Portal. First, there would be a sense of snugness, of cushioned comfort, of home-coming. Next, a gradual awakening to consciousness in a certain little room, very dear and familiar, sequestered in some corner of the more populous and roaring part of London: solitary, the world walled out, but full of a brooding sense of peace and of possession. At times I would make my way there, unerringly, through the wet and windy streets, climb the well-known

well-known staircase, open the ever-welcoming door. More often I was there already, ensconced in the most comfortable chair in the world, the lamp lit, the fire glowing ruddily. But always the same feeling of a home-coming, of the world shut out, of the ideal encasement. On the shelves were a few books—a very few—but just the editions I had sighed for, the editions which refuse to turn up, or which poverty glowers at on alien shelves. On the walls were a print or two, a woodcut, an etching—not many. Old loves, all of them, apparitions that had flashed across the field of view in sale-rooms and vanished again in a blaze of three figures; but never possessed—until now. All was modest—O, so very modest! But all was my very own, and, what was more, everything in that room was exactly right.

After three or four visits, the uncanniness of the repetition set me thinking. Could it possibly be, that this was no dream at all? Had this chamber, perhaps, a real existence, and was I all the time leading, somewhere, another life—a life within a life—a life that I constantly forgot, within the life that I happened to remember? I tried my best to bring the thing to absolute proof. First, there was that frequent sense of extreme physical weariness with which I was wont to confront the inevitable up-rising of the morning—might not that afford a clue? Alas, no: I traced my mornings back, far behind the beginnings of the dream. I could not remember a day, since those rare white ones at school when it was a whole holiday, and summer was boon and young, when I had faced the problem of getting up with anything but a full sense of disgust. Next I thought, I will consult my accounts. Rooms must be paid for in London, however modest they may be; and the blessed figures can't lie. Then I recollected that I did not keep any accounts—never *had* kept any accounts—never intended to keep any beastly accounts—and, on the whole, I confess I was

I was rather glad. Statistics would have been a mean prosaic way of plucking out the heart of this mystery. My only chance seemed to lie in coming across the place by accident. Then perhaps the extinguished torch would re-kindle, the darkened garret of memory would be re-illumed, and it would be in my power at last to handle those rare editions, not capriciously as now, but at any hour I pleased. So I haunted Gray's Inn, Staple Inn, Clifford's Inn ; hung about by-streets in Bloomsbury, even back-waters in Chelsea ; but all to no result. It waits, that sequestered chamber, it waits for the serene moment when the brain is in just the apt condition, and ready to switch on the other memory even as one switches on the electric light with a turn of the wrist. Fantasy ? well—perhaps. But the worst of it is, one never can feel quite sure. Only a dream, of course. And yet—the enchanting possibility !

And this possibility, which (one feels convinced) the wilful brain could make reality in a moment if it were only in the right humour, might be easily brought about by some accidental physical cause, some touch, scent, sound, gifted with the magic power of recall. Could my fingers but pass over the smooth surface of those oak balustrades so familiar to me, in a trice I would stand at the enchanted door. Could I even see in some casual shop-window one of those prints my other existence hoards so safe and sure—but that is unlikely indeed. Those prints of the dim land of dreams, " they never are sold in the merchant's mart ! " Still, if one were only to turn up, in twopenny box or dusty portfolio, down in Southwark, off the roaring Strand, or somewhere along the quaint unclassified Brompton Road, in a flash the darkness would be day, the crooked would be made straight, and no policeman would be called upon to point out the joyous way.

If I have special faith in this sort of divining-rod, it is because of a certain strange case I once encountered and never quite elucidated. There was a certain man, respectable enough in every particular; wore drab spats all the year round, lived in a suburb, and did daily business on the "Baltic." When the weather was fine, and a halcyon calm brooded o'er the surface of the Baltic, instead of taking his suburban train at Cannon Street, he used to walk as far as Charing Cross: and before departing, if time allowed, he would turn into the National Gallery. Of a catholic mind, for he had never strayed down the tortuous byways of Art, he only went in to be amused, and was prepared to take his entertainment from all schools alike, without any of the narrow preferences of the cultured. From the very first, however, the Early Tuscans gripped him with a strange fascination, so that he rarely penetrated any further. What it was precisely that so detained him could never be ascertained. The man was not apt in the expression of subtle emotion, and never succeeded in defining the strong "possession"—for such it seemed to be—by which he was caught and held. The next phase in the case was, that he took to disappearing. He disappeared literally and absolutely—sometimes for a few days, sometimes for a fortnight or more; and on his return could tell nothing, explain nothing. Indeed, he did not seem to be really conscious of any absence. It was noted in time that his disappearances always coincided with his visits to the National Gallery. Thither he could be tracked; there all trace of him would cease. His female relations—an unimaginative, uneducated crew—surmised the unkindest things in their narrow way. Still, even they found it difficult to fling a stone at the Early Tuscans. For myself, I like to think that there was some bit of another life hidden away in him—some tranced memory of another far-away existence on Apennine slopes—which

—which some quality in these pictures, and in these alone, had power to evoke. And I love to think that, transformed by this magic touch back into the other man of him, he passed, dream-possessed, forth from the portico, through Trafalgar Square, and into Charing Cross Station. That there, oblivious of all suburbs, he purchased one of those little books of coupons so much more romantic than your vulgar inland slip of pasteboard, and in due course sped Southwards—irresistibly drawn,—took the Alps in a series of whorls, burrowings, and breathless flights o'er torrent and fall—till he basked at last, still speeding South, in the full sunlight that steeps the Lombard plain. Arrived in time, where his destiny (which was also his past) awaited him, I could see him, avoiding clamour of piazza, shunning prim airlessness of Galleria and Accademia, climbing the white road to where, in some little village or red-tiled convent, lurked the creation, madonna or saint, that held the other end of the subtle thread. The boy-lover, had he been, of this prim-tressed model? Or the St. George or homely St. Roch who guarded her? Or himself the very painter? Whatever the bond, here I could imagine him to linger, steeping his soul in the picture and in the surroundings so native both to it and to the man whose life for a brief minute he lived again, till such time as that sullen devil within him—the later memory of the man he also was—began to stir drowsily and to urge him homewards, even as the other had urged him out. Once back, old sights and sounds would develop the later man into full being and consciousness, and as before he would tread the floor of the Baltic, while oblivion swallowed the Tuscan existence—until the next time!

These instances, it is true, are but "sports" in oblivion-lore. But, putting aside such puzzle-fragments of memory, it is impossible not to realise, in sad seriousness, that of all our recollection has

has once held, by far the larger part must be by this time in the realm of the forgot; and that every day some fresh delightful little entity pales, sickens, and passes over to the majority. Sir Thomas Browne has quaintly written concerning the first days of the young world, "when the living might exceed the dead, and to depart this world could not be properly said, to go unto the greater number"; but in these days of crowded thought, of the mind cultured and sensitised to receive such a swarm of impressions, no memory that sighs its life out but joins a host far exceeding what it leaves behind. 'Tis but a scanty wallet that each of us carries at his back. Few, indeed, and of a sorry mintage, the thin coins that jingle therein. Our gold, lightly won, has been as lightly scattered, along waysides left far behind. Oblivion, slowly but surely stalking us, gathers it with a full arm, and on the floor of his vast treasure-house stacks it in shining piles.

And if it is the larger part that has passed from us, why not also the better part? Indeed, logic almost requires it; for to select and eliminate, to hold fast and let go at will, is not given to us. As we jog along life's highroad, the knowledge of this inability dogs each conscious enjoyment, till with every pleasant experience comes also the annoying reflection, that it is a sheer toss-up whether this is going to be a gain, a solid profit to carry along with us, or fairy gold that shall turn to dust and nothingness in a few short mornings at best. As we realise our helplessness in the matter, we are almost ready to stamp and to swear. Will no one discover the chemical which shall fix the fleeting hue? That other recollection, now—that humiliating, that disgusting experience of ten years ago—*that* is safe enough, permanent, indestructible, warranted not to fade. If in this rag-fair we were only allowed to exchange and barter, to pick and choose! Oblivion, looking on, smiles grimly. It is he that shall select,

not

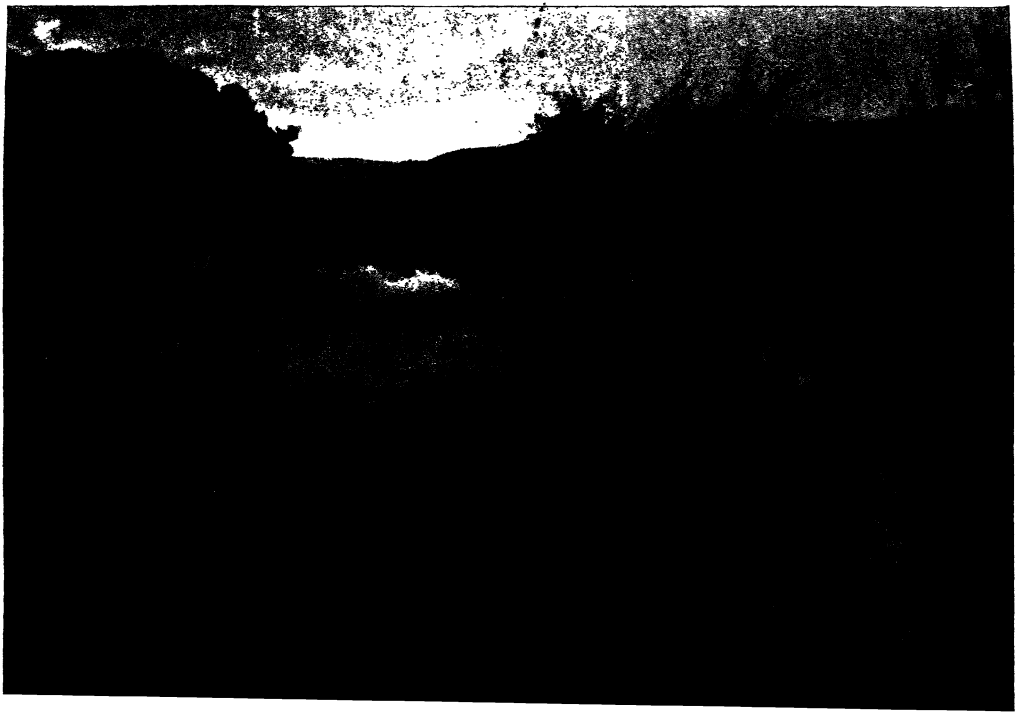
not we ; our part is but to look on helplessly, while—though he may condescend to leave us a pearl or two—the bulk of our jewels is swept into his pocket.

One hope alone remains to us, by way of consolation. These memories whose passing we lament, they are torpid only, not dead. They lie in a charmed sleep, whence a chance may awaken them, a touch make the dry bones live ; though at present we know not the waking spell. Like Arthur, they have not perished, but only passed, and like him they may come again from the Avalon where they slumber. The chance is small, indeed. But the Merlin who controls these particular brain-cells, fitful and capricious though he be, after the manner of magicians, has powers to which we dare not assign limits. At any moment the stop may be pulled out, the switch pressed, the key turned, the Princess kissed. Then shall the spell-bound spring to life, the floodgates rise, the baked arid canals gleam with the silver tide ; and once more we shall be fulfilled of the old joys, the old thrills, the old tears and laughter.

Better still—perhaps best of all—as those joyous old memories, hale and fresh once more, troop out of the catacombs into the light, these insistent ones of the present, this sullen host that beleaguers us day and night with such threatening obsession, may vanish, may pass, may flee away utterly, gone in their turn to lodge with Oblivion—and a good riddance !

Solitude

By John Crooke



The Poet's Picture

By Olive Custance

THE pent-up passion of her soul
Deepens the pallor of her face,
Against her throbbing heart the whole
Wide sorrow of the world finds place,
And deep compassion and love's grace.

The forehead 'neath the cloudy hair
Is like a child's—so pure and white—
Sweet words have curved the rose-lips fair—
And in the wistful eyes a flight
Of fluctuant dreams pass, day and night.

Frail girl in whom God's glories meet,
Why was she so divinely made?
Surely the angels, when complete
Her radiant spirit stood arrayed
In such fair flesh, felt half afraid!

The dust of earthly days and years
 Scarce dims her delicate loveliness—
Only the eyelids, tired of tears,
 Droop low—their flower-like pallidness
 Bruised faintly by pain's bitterness.

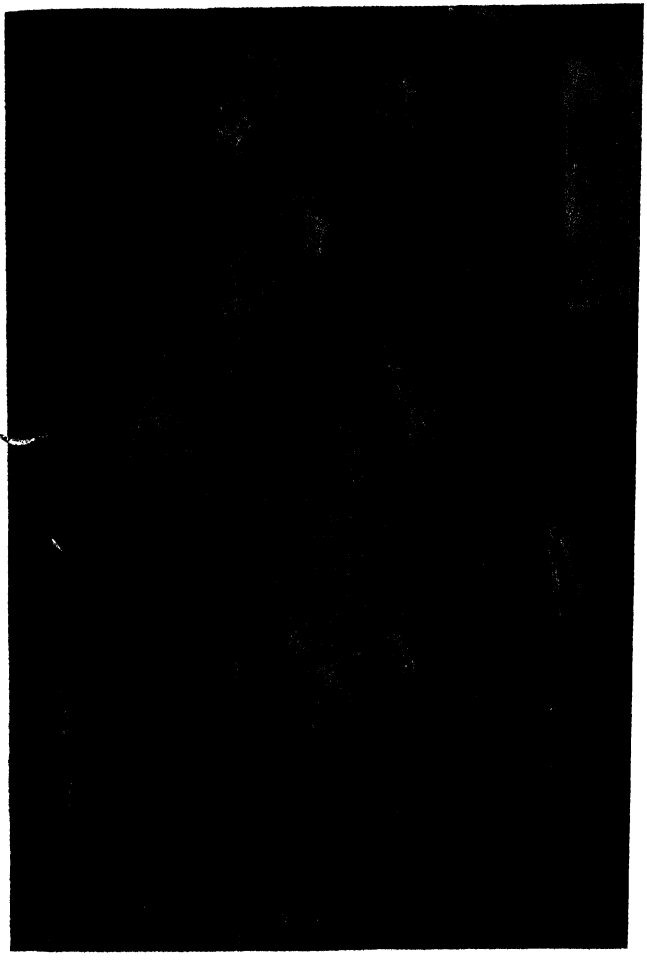
Only her hands, like ivory,
 Are stained a little by the sun,
And roughed with constant use—for she
 Is careless of their beauty won
 From dawn of life so easily.

Alas! that her slim feet should tread
 The world's uneven stony ways!
That she should know dull cares and dread—
 Long lonely nights and sordid days,
 Being so fashioned for love's praise.

Lest she should sin or faint from fear,
 Let one swift angel heed my prayer,
And straight descending to this sphere
 Spread wide wings o'er her everywhere,—
 Lest she should fall—who is so dear!

Charcoal Study

By John da Costa



Stories Toto Told Me

By Baron Corvo

I—About San Pietro and San Paolo

ONCE upon a time, sir, the people in Rome were building two churches, the one for San Pietro on the Monte Vaticano, and the other for San Paolo outside the walls of the city. The two Saints used to spend all their spare time sitting on one of the balconies of heaven and watching the builders, for they were both very anxious about their churches. San Pietro desired to have his church finished before San Paolo's, and so, every night after it was dark, he used to leave the keys of heaven in the porch, and ask his brother, Sant' Andrea, to give an eye to the gate while he went round the corner for a minute or two. Then he would slip down to San Paolo's church and take to pieces the work which the builders had done during the day, and if there were any carvings or pillars or things of that sort which took his fancy, he would carry them away and build them into his own church, patching up the part he had taken them from so well that no one could tell the difference. And so, while the builders of the church of San Pietro made a progress which was wonderful, the builders of the church of San Paolo did not make any progress at all.

This went on for a long while, and San Paolo became more uneasy

uneasy in his mind every day, and he could not take his food, and nothing gave him any pleasure. Santa Cecilia tried to amuse him with some new songs she had made, but this caused him to get quite angry, and he said that a woman ought to learn in silence with subjection.

One day while he was leaning over the balcony, he saw two pillars taken into his church which were of yellow antique, most rare and precious, and had been sent from some foreign country (I do not know its name). He was altogether delighted, and he went down to the gate and asked San Pietro to be so kind as to tell him whether he had ever seen finer pillars. But San Pietro only said they were rather pretty, and then he asked San Paolo to get out of the way and let him shut the gate, in case some improper souls should sneak in.

That night, sir, when it was dark, San Pietro went and robbed those two pillars of yellow antique, and set them up in his own church. But in the morning, San Paolo, who had thought of nothing but his new pillars all through the night, said a black mass because it was shorter, and then went on to the balcony to have the pleasure of looking at his church with its beautiful pillars of yellow antique. And when he saw that they were not there he became disturbed in his mind, and he went and sat down in a shady place to consider what he should do next. After much thought it appeared to him that he had been robbed, and as he knew that a person who has once committed a theft will continue to steal as long as he remains free, he resolved to watch his church at night, that he might discover who had stolen his pillars.

During the day the builders of San Paolo's church put up two fresh pillars of yellow antique, and two of porphyry, and two of green antique as well. San Paolo gloated over these fine things from his seat on the balcony, for he knew that they were so beautiful

tiful that they would tempt the thief to make another raid, and then he would catch him.

After the Ave Maria he made friends with one of the angels who was just putting on his armour in the guard-room before taking his place in the line of sentries who encircle the city of God both by day and night. These angels, sir, are at the least a hundred feet high, and San Paolo asked one of them, whose post was near the gate, to hide him under his wings so that he could watch for the robber without being seen. The angel said that he was most happy to oblige; for San Paolo was a Roman of Rome, and very well thought of in heaven; so when the night came on San Paolo hid in the shadow of his feathers.

Presently he saw San Pietro go out of the gate, and the light, of which the bodies of the saints are made, went with him, so that, though the earth was in darkness, San Paolo could see plainly all that he did. And he picked up the two fresh pillars of yellow antique, and the two of red porphyry, and also the two of green antique in his hand, just as you, sir, would pick up six paint-brushes, and he carried them to his own church on the Monte Vaticano and set them up there. And when he had patched up the place from which he had taken the pillars so that they could not be missed, he came back into heaven.

San Paolo met him at the gate and accused him of thieving, but San Pietro answered blusteringly that he was the Prince of the Apostles, and that he had a right to all the best pillars for his church. San Paolo replied that once before he had had occasion to withstand San Pietro to the face because he was to be blamed (and that was at Antioch, sir), and then high words arose, and the two saints quarrelled so loudly that the Padre Eterno, sitting upon His Sapphire Throne, sent San Michele Arcangiolo to bring the disputants into His Presence.

Then

Then San Paolo said:

"O Maestà Onnipotente,—The citizens of Rome are building two churches, the one for me and the other for San Pietro; and for some time I have noticed that while the builders of my church do not seem to make any progress with their work, the church of San Pietro is nearly finished. The day before yesterday (and to-day is Saturday) two pillars of yellow antique were set up in my church, most beautiful pillars, Maestà, but somebody stole them away during the night. And yesterday six pillars were set up, two of yellow antique, two of green antique, and two of porphyry. To-night I watched to see if they would be stolen, and I have seen San Pietro go down and take them to his own church on the Monte Vaticano."

Then the Padre Eterno turned to San Pietro, asking him if he had anything to say.

And San Pietro answered:

"Domeniddio, I have long ago learnt the lesson that it is not well to deny that which your Omniscience knows to be true, and I acknowledge that I have taken the pillars, and many other things too, from the church of San Paolo, and have set them up in my own. Nevertheless, I desire to represent that there is no question of robbery here. Altissimo, you have deigned to make me the Prince of the Apostolic College, the Keeper of the Keys of Heaven, and the Head of Your Church on earth, and it is not fitting that the churches which men build in my honour should be less magnificent than those which they build for San Paolo. Therefore, in taking these pillars that San Paolo makes such a ridiculous fuss about, I am simply within my right —a right which belongs to the dignity of the rank which the immortal splendour of your Majesty has been graciously pleased to confer upon me."

But

But this defence did not content the Padre Eterno. He said that the secret method on which San Pietro worked was a proof that he knew he was doing what he ought not to do, and further, that it was not fair to the men who were building San Paolo's church to take away the fine things for which they spent their money for the honour of San Paolo. So he cautioned San Pietro not to allow it to occur again.

On the next day there was a festa and the builders did not work, but on the Monday they placed in the church of San Paolo several slabs of lapis lazuli and malachite, and during the night San Pietro, who was the most bold and daring of men, had the hardihood to take them away and put them in his own church, right before the very eyes of San Paolo, who stood at the gate watching him. By the time he returned San Paolo had made a complaint before the Padre Eterno, and San Pietro was most severely spoken to, and warned that, if he persisted in his disobedience, not even his exalted rank and general usefulness and good conduct would save him from punishment.

The following day, which was Tuesday, a marvellous baldachino of jasper and violet marble, which was the gift of the Grand Turk, was put up in the church of San Paolo, and at night San Pietro went down as usual and robbed it. For the third time San Paolo complained to the Padre Eterno, and then all the Court of Heaven was summoned into the Presence to hear judgment pronounced.

The Padre Eterno said—and His Voice, sir, was like rolling thunder—that as San Pietro had been guilty of disobedience to the Divine Decree, in that, urged on by vanity, he had taken the property of San Paolo for his own church on the Monte Vaticano, and by so doing had prevented the church of San Paolo from being finished, it was an Order that until the end of time the great

great church of San Pietro in Rome should never be completed. The Padre Eterno also added, that as He would give no encouragement to sneaks and tell-tale-tits, the church of San Paolo outside the walls, though finished, should be subjected to destruction and demolition, and, as often as it was rebuilt, so often should it be destroyed.

And you know, sir, that San Paolo's church is always being burnt down or blown up, and that San Pietro's church has never left the builders' hands.

II—About the Lilies of San Luigi

You know, sir, that San Sebastiano and San Pancrazio were always very friendly together. While they lived in this world they used to get into mischief in each other's company, for they were extremely fond of playing tricks upon the pagans who were putting the Christians to death.

Then, when their turn came, they gladly suffered martyrdom, and San Pancrazio was killed by a wild beast in the Colosseo in Rome, while San Sebastiano was shot as full of arrows as a hedgehog is of prickles, and when that did not kill him he was beaten with a club until he died. And then they both went to live in heaven for ever and the day after.

Now, I must tell you what they look like, so that you may know them when you see them. First of all, you must understand that the saints in heaven are always young; that is to say, if you are old when your life in this world comes to its end, you just shut your eyes while your angel takes you to heaven, and when you open them the next minute you are there, and you have

have gone back to the prime of your life, and so you are for always; but if you die while you are young you do not change your age, but remain at the age at which you died. That is, if you die a saint, or a martyr, which is better; and, of course, you can always do that if you like. And even supposing it is good for you to have a little purgatory first, if you have kept good friends with the Madonna she will go and take you out the Saturday after you have died, and then you can go to heaven.

And your body, too, is changed, so that you cannot have any more pains or illnesses. Oh, yes; it is made of flesh, just the same to look at as this; but instead of the flesh being made of the dust of the earth it is made of the Fire of God, and that is why wherever the saints go they are all bright like the stars.

Ah, well, San Sebastiano was eighteen years old when he went to heaven, and so he is always eighteen years old; and San Pancrazio was fourteen, and so he is always fourteen; and they are quite as cheerful and daring and mischievous as they were in this world, so that when a joke has been played upon any of the saints they always say, "By Bacchus, there are those boys again."

There are, of course, very many boys in heaven, but now I am only telling you of these two—San Sebastiano and San Pancrazio, and the third, whose name is San Luigi, and the angel of San Sebastiano, who is called Iriello.

You must know that San Luigi was altogether different to San Sebastiano and San Pancrazio. Of course he had not been a martyr like them, though he is a very great saint indeed, and I suppose it is because he has only been in heaven a little while and is new to the place that his manners are so stiff. He always goes about with his eyes on the ground, you know, and there is not a bit of fun in him. You see, he was a Jesuit, and there were no such

such things in the world for hundreds of years after San Sebastiano and San Pancrazio had been saints in heaven. When he first came, San Sebastiano and San Pancrazio thought there was another boy like themselves to join in their games, and they were quite eager to make his acquaintance and to give him a welcome. So the moment the choir struck up the "Iste Confessor," they rushed down to the gate to offer him their friendship. San Luigi came slowly through the archway, dressed in a cassock and surplice, carrying a lily in his hand, and his eyes were fixed upon the ground; but when San Sebastiano and San Pancrazio, with their arms locked together, said how pleased they were to see him, he looked up at them shyly and said, "Many thanks," and then the appearance of San Sebastiano so shocked him that he blushed deeply and veiled his eyes again, and after that he kept out of their way as much as possible.

You see, sir, San Sebastiano was quite naked. Indeed he had nothing about him but his halo and an arrow; for when the pagans made a target of him they stripped off all his clothes and so he came to heaven like that. You can see his picture in the Duomo whenever you choose, if you do not believe me. But he was so beautiful and muscular, and straight and strong, and his flesh so white and fine, and his hair like shining gold, that no one had ever thought of him as naked before. San Luigi, however, found him perfectly dreadful, and pretended to shiver whenever he met him, which was not very often, because San Luigi spent most of his time in the chapel saying the Little Office.

San Sebastiano did consider him slightly rude, perhaps, and, of course, San Pancrazio agreed with his friend, and though they were quite good-natured and unwilling to make any unpleasantness, still they could not help feeling hurt when this newcomer—and that was the worst name they ever called him—turned up his nose

nose because their minds and their manners were more gay and free than his.

One very hot afternoon in summer the two saints went to practise their diving in a delicious pool of cool water under a waterfall; and when they were tired of that they lay down on the bank and dangled their legs in the stream, while the sun was drying their haloes.

Presently San Luigi came creeping along with an old surplice in his hand, and he went up to San Sebastiano and offered it to him, holding his lily up before his face all the time he was speaking. San Sebastiano did not move, but lay there on the green grass, looking at San Luigi with his merry laughing eyes, and saying not a word; and San Pancrazio did the same. San Luigi repeated his offer from behind his lily, and implored San Sebastiano to put on the surplice, just to cover up his poor legs, he said. San Sebastiano replied that he didn't think there was anything amiss with his legs, which were good enough, as far as he could see, because the Padre Eterno had made them like that, and He always did all things well. Then San Luigi offered the surplice to San Pancrazio, who was also naked, because he had been bathing; but he laughed as he answered, with many thanks, that he had some very good clothes of his own, which he would put on when he was dry; and he pointed out his beautiful tunic of white wool with a broad purple stripe down the front, and his golden bulla, and his sandals of red leather, with the pearl crescent on the toes, for he was noble, sir, and also a Roman of Rome. San Luigi said that the tunic was rather short but it was better than nothing, and then he turned to San Sebastiano and again entreated him to put on the surplice.

Presently San Sebastiano stretched out his splendid arm from the long grass where he lay, and grabbed the surplice so suddenly that

that San Luigi dropped down on his knees, aud his lily became disarranged ; and while he was picking himself up San Sebastiano rolled the surplice into a ball and tossed it over to San Pancrazio, who threw it back to him ; and the two saints played ball with it quite merrily for some minutes, and all the time San Luigi was protesting that he had not brought it out for that purpose, and beseeching them not to be so frivolous. But the game amused them to such an extent that they were now running to and fro upon the bank and taking long shots at each other. San Sebastiano had just made a particularly clever catch, but in returning the ball he over-balanced himself and tumbled splash into the pool. This had a bad effect on his aim, and instead of the ball going in the direction he intended—that is to say, towards San Pancrazio—it flew straight in San Luigi's face. He was still holding up his lily for a screen, and consequently it was crushed and broken and all the blooms destroyed ; and he seemed so grieved at this that the two friends—for San Sebastiano immediately swam to the side and climbed out of the pool—tried to console him by telling him that they would get him another in two winks of an eye.

But San Luigi said that was no good, because he always got his lilies off his altars down in the world, and no others would suit him ; and there were none there now because it was not his festa till to-morrow, and nobody would offer him any lilies till then.

When they heard this San Sebastiano and San Pancrazio burst into roars of laughter, and they made such a noise that the Padre Eterno, who was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, sent one of the Cherubim from His Aureola to know what it was all about.

San Pancrazio jumped into his tunic and put his bulla round his neck, while San Sebastiano laced his sandals for him, and then the

the two friends stood at "Attention!" as the Suprema Maestà e Grandezza came under the trees towards them. Of course, you know, sir, that San Sebastiano was in the Emperor's body-guard when he lived in the world, and he had taught San Pancrazio all the drill.

Then San Sebastiano looked boldly into the Face of the Padre Eterno, and said:

"O Padre celeste e Domeniddio, we were laughing at Luigi because he will not have the lilies of Paradise, and prefers the nasty things they put upon his altars in the world."

San Luigi got quite angry at hearing his lilies called nasty, and the Padre Eterno said that the word certainly ought not to have been used unless San Sebastiano had a very good reason.

Then San Pancrazio explained that he was sure San Sebastiano did not mean to make any reflection upon the lilies themselves, because it would not be becoming to speak against the handiwork of the Padre Eterno; but it was because the people who offered the lilies to San Luigi did not come by them in an honourable manner, that he had said they were nasty; and San Sebastiano nodded his head and said that was just it.

These words made San Luigi still more angry; and his wrath was so righteous and unaffected that San Sebastiano saw he was in ignorance of the dirty tricks of his clients, so he said that if l'Altissima Maestà would deign to allow them, he and San Pancrazio would show San Luigi where his lilies came from. The Padre Eterno was graciously pleased to grant permission, and passed on His way, for He knew that San Sebastiano was a boy whom you could trust anywhere.

Then San Sebastiano told San Luigi that if he could put up with the company of San Pancrazio he proposed they should make a little gita into the world that very night, because, as the next

day was his festa, all the boys would be getting lilies for his altars; and in the meantime he invited him to come and look over the ramparts.

So the three saints went and stood upon the wall of gold; and beneath their feet they could see the world whirling round in space. San Sebastiano pointed out that by midnight they would be just above a little white town which clustered up the side of a distant mountain. He said that it was called Genzano, and that the Prince Francesco Sforza Cesarini had there a palace with the most beautiful gardens in the world, which were sure to be full of lilies at that time of year.

San Luigi made answer that he would like to say his matin and lauds, and to get his meditation ready for the morning, before they started; and he agreed to meet San Sebastiano and San Pancrazio at a little before midnight.

You know, sir, that there is no night in heaven, or rather, I should say, that it does not get dark there; and so, when San Luigi came to look for San Sebastiano and San Pancrazio, he found them in the orchard near the gate, turning a skipping-rope for Sant' Agnese and some of her friends; but San Vito and San Venanzio, who were tired of playing morra, were willing to take their places at the rope; and then they were all ready to start on their journey.

San Sebastiano called his angel, Iriello and told him where he wanted to go.

I ought to have let you know that the appearance of Iriello was exactly like that of San Sebastiano, only he did not carry an arrow, and he had wings growing out of his arms of the same colour as his body, but getting whiter towards the tips of the feathers. And then, of course, he was as big as a giant, like all the other angels—how many yards high I cannot say, because I do not exactly know.

The

The three saints mounted him in this manner:

San Pancrazio stood on his left instep and put one arm round his leg to steady himself, and San Sebastiano stood on his right instep and put one arm round his leg to steady himself too; San Luigi also stood on the right instep of Iriello, close to San Sebastiano, who clasped him round the waist with his other arm. When they were ready the angel, with a downward swoop of his wings, rose from off the wall of gold, and then, spreading them out to their full extent, remained motionless and dropped gently but swiftly towards the earth.

I should tell you that they had all made themselves invisible, as the saints do when they come down into the world, except when there is some one present who is good enough to merit a vision of the holy ones. And when they alighted in the garden by the magnolia tree, they left the angel there and went to sit down near the lily-beds. You understand that no one could see them, and they rested against the edge of the fountain and waited, and San Luigi took out his beads to while away the time.

Presently three or four men came into the garden very quietly, and they stood under the shade of a blue hydrangia bush. The eldest of them appeared to be giving directions to the others, and then they separated and went each to a different part of the garden.

"Who were those men?" asked San Luigi.

"Tell him, 'Bastiano," said San Pancrazio in a whisper.

"Gardeners," murmured San Sebastiano; "they have to stay up all the night between the twentieth and the twenty-first of June."

"And I suppose they will be going to cut the lilies for the boys who are coming to fetch them?" said San Luigi.

San Sebastiano and San Pancrazio nearly choked with laughter, and

and then San Sebastiano said that if San Luigi would have the goodness to be patient, he should see what he should see.

They watched the gardeners go and hide themselves in the syringas, and for some time there was silence.

Then there came six ragamuffin boys, creeping cautiously through the darkness, and they made their way towards the lily-beds. As soon as they got there the men in the bushes jumped out upon them with a loud yell, whereupon the boys took to their heels and fled in a different direction to that from which they had come. The men gave chase, but they ran so swiftly that they were soon out of sight. Now, as soon as they were gone twenty or thirty more ragamuffin boys rushed noiselessly out of the darkness, and began to cut the lilies into sheaves as fast as they could. In a short time there was not one left standing, and then they made off with their spoils and disappeared.

The next minute the gardeners came back, loudly lamenting that they had failed to catch the robbers; but when they saw the beds where the lilies once stood, they called for the Madonna to have pity on them. And the chief gardener wept, for he said his highness the Prince would surely send him to prison.

And the three saints sat still by the fountain.

San Luigi was trembling very greatly; but because he is, as you know, of such wonderful innocence, he did not understand what he had seen, and he begged his companions to explain it to him.

So San Sebastiano told him that the boys of the world were wicked little devils, and very clever, too. So they sent the six best runners first, because they knew the gardeners would be watching. And these six were to make the gardeners chase them and lead them a long dance, so that the others could come as soon as the place was clear and steal the lilies. All of which had been done.

And then San Luigi was very grieved; but most of all because the gardeners would lose their places. So he asked San Sebastiano if he could not do something for them.

Then San Sebastiano said that they would be very pleased and quite happy if San Luigi would show himself to them, for they were most respectable men, and pious into the bargain; neither had they sworn nor used bad words.

But San Luigi was so modest that he did not like to show himself alone, and he held out his hands, the one to San Sebastiano and the other to San Pancrazio, saying:

"My friends—if you allow me to say so—dear 'Bastiano—dear Pancrazio—who have both been so kind to me, let us all show ourselves, and then I will give them back the lilies."

So they called Iriello and mounted upon his insteps again, and then a silver light, more bright than the moon, beamed from them, and the gardeners saw in the midst of the blaze the great angel by the magnolia tree, and the three saints standing in front of him—San Luigi in the middle, with San Sebastiano on his right hand and San Pancrazio on his left hand, with their arms round each other. Then the gardeners fell on their knees and returned thanks for this vision; and, as the angel spread his wings and rose from the ground, San Luigi made the sign of the cross over the garden. And the men stood amazed and watched till the brightness seemed to be only a tiny star; and so the three saints went back with Iriello into heaven.

And after they had disappeared the gardeners saw that the lily-beds were full of flowers more beautiful than had ever been seen before. But when the thieves brought their stolen flowers to the Church of San Luigi in the Via Carolina they were nothing but sticks and dirty weeds.

And the three saints are most friendly together now, because

San

San Sebastiano and San Pancrazio cannot help admiring San Luigi for his strange innocence, as well as for the strange penance with which he gained his place in heaven; and they are always delighted to do anything to oblige him, because they have been longer there than he has and understand the ways of that blessed place so well; while San Luigi carries only the lilies of Paradise now, and is never so happy as when he is choosing the best branches of golden palm for his two martyr-friends; nor is he ever shocked at San Pancrazio because he is of a gay heart, nor at San Sebastiano because he is naked and not ashamed.

How could he be ashamed, sir?

Fair Play

By Fred Hall


'Fairplay'

Two Songs

By Frances Nicholson

I—Ophelia

Oh, tender night!
Lay my head on thy lap and dull me
With deep-drugged breath
Of sweet-lipped violet
Or heavy woodbine wreath,
That I may soon forget
How hope no more may lull me
To dreams of light.

Oh, pitying earth!
Bid thy far-wandering streamlets tell me
Some place of rest
'Neath sedgy banks that yet
With yellow buds are drest,
That I may soon forget
Such sorrow erst befell me
In true love's dearth.

II—Before The Dawn

In the weird stillness just before the dawn
 Low sang the waves, like murmuring tones that bless,
 Along the far, dim shore, by cape and ness,
And furtive winds blew soft across the lawn,
 Touching with spirit-lips in faint caress
 The virgin-lilies, white and motionless,
In the weird stillness just before the dawn.

Was it a dream, or did you really come
 'Twixt the wan glimmer of my casement, where
 The sweet wind followed you? Did I not hear
Your low voice, passion-thrilled, I, speechless, dumb?
 While in the tender gloom, near and more near,
 Your fond lips drew to mine and rested there —
Was it a rapturous dream, or did you come?

A Pastoral

By Frank Richards



Bread and the Circus

By Hubert Crackanthorpe

THEY are the largest travelling circus in Europe. Their staff numbers over two hundred and fifty; they have a hundred and seventy horses, seven elephants, eight lions, two tigers, three camels, and a dromedary; their *cortège* on the road is sixty-three waggons long. I joined them at Dieppe: they had parted with their interpreter, and I took his place.

* * *

Monday, 2 *a.m.*—There was no moon; all night the wind had been screaming, driving spasmodic showers before it; overhead, above the roofs, vague forms of tattered clouds were scudding.

In the market-place, flaring petroleum lights flitting to and fro; dim figures hurrying hither and thither through the darkness; loose horses neighing as they stampeded among the tent-ropes; incessant volleys of oaths echoing from wall to wall.

"Here," Jim, the stud-groom, called to me, "hold this lot o' 'orses, will yer?" He thrust a bundle of halter-ropes into my hand, and disappeared into the darkness.

The big tent came down with a run, and lay before me bellying and flapping in the wind, followed by the crashing of the poles, as the men swung them into the tent-waggon. Close beside me, I caught

caught a fitful glimpse of a drunken groom, muttering to himself as he belaboured a horse with his fist; then, of a sudden, Jim's voice bellowing behind me:

"Mind yerself. Shift them 'orses. The elephants are comin!" And their black, monstrous forms loomed in front of me, moving silently past, swinging their trunks from side to side.

"We always give 'em an hour's start. They can't do above three mile an hour. Come, bring them 'orses up to the band-waggon. Here, boy, hold a light for 'im. Look alive; we're behind time as it is."

Already, on all sides, the rumblings of heavy wheels, and crackings of whips were starting up; the waggons were moving to their places. The nigger tent-men set a light to the soiled forage; the wind scattered the dense columns of smoke towards the sea, and the great tongues of crimson flame flickered up, licking the air, and revealing that the market-place had at last been cleared.

"All ready," sang Jim's swinging tones.

"All ready all ready," floated back a dozen wavering, distant answers.

"Into the buggy with yer. Pull the hay up round yer waist: it'll keep the cold out."

Ahead, through the twilight, toiling up the hill, we could perceive the long train of lumbering waggons, each with a ragged petroleum flame swinging beneath the axle.

"Pull ov—er. Pull ov—er," and one by one they made way for us as we cantered by them.

"Wake 'em up. Wake 'em up," and Jim, upright in buggy, lashed each successive team into a hand gallop.

When we had reached the front living-waggon, and only the wet, open road glimmering wanly in the sickly early morning light, lay ahead of us, back we turned down the hill again, waking

up

up the stragglers, rousing the sleeping drivers with fine bursts of the vernacular. And so, up and down the line, till we were hoarse with shouting, and till the last waggon had left the outskirts of the town.

* * *

4 *a.m.*—For an hour we had been leading the way, jogging along the straight, broad road. Jim had dropped to sleep, and was swaying heavily from side to side, his battered face resting on my shoulder.

Behind us the continuous, somnolent rumbling of the waggon wheels, and the rhythmical tramp of the horses' feet. Now and then, a boy on a thoroughbred would gallop past us, cracking his stock-whip, chasing a drove of foals. The treeless plain lay around us, all dark and mysterious ; at intervals, we brutally broke the silence of some sleeping village street.

By-and-by, a rift broke in the clouds ; a slab of dark-blue sky appeared ; and the rain ceased to beat in our faces.

And a strange, drowsy sensation crept over me—a sensation that I had been sitting there always, driving the cream-coloured mare, endlessly journeying through the night, with the long line of waggons lumbering behind.

* * *

6 *a.m.*—When I awoke, the sun had risen, and the great plain of corn, stretching away and away to the horizon, was rippling in the fresh morning breeze like a glittering golden lake. Crowds of peasants were running from their harvesting to the road-side to watch us go by. Moving ahead I could see a dark, shifting mass ; the elephants were still some two miles away. I fell to wondering curiously concerning this strange little world with whom I had

thrown

thrown in my lot, and to envying them not a little their roving, adventurous, free-living life.

* * *

St. Valery-en-Caux, 9 *a.m.*—We were encamped in the centre of the town, in front of the Hôtel de Ville. In less than an hour and a half every tent was in its place, and the horses, tethered in droves, were clattering to water through the streets.

It was settled that I was to mess in the elephant tent with the Armstrongs—Joe, the elephant-keeper, Maggie his wife, and Lieutenant George, the lion-tamer, his brother, better known to the public as "Himalayan Henry."

They were both handsome, strapping fellows. George, the "lieutenant," had been in the show business all his life. He wore a trailing, coal-black moustache, and his hat cocked jauntily on the side of his head, and boasted himself a terrible chap with ladies. Joe had been but three years in the show. Before that he had been a tram-conductor in Birmingham. He was slow of speech, hulking, and shy. Maggie was a Lancashire girl. She had big blue eyes, a pale complexion, and rosy, sensitive mouth. She had been married just six months. She bullied her husband; George, on the strength of his superior salary, bullied them both; and they all three bullied "Scottie," or "Jimmy Pimples," the little under elephant-keeper, a sandy-haired, crimson-faced, unshaven, unwashed ruffian, who helped Maggie Armstrong to wash up the dishes, did odd jobs for us, and rated the elephants in generous Glasgow.

"Scottie" slept on a hay-bed beside the camels and messed with the coons beneath the tack-waggon; and we four lived in a small double tent pitched in a corner of the large one that covered the elephants.

There were seven of them, as I have said.—"Jim," the patriarch, with

with his wizened, wrinkled forehead, his tattered, worn-out ears, and weak, sunken eyes, for ever wearily winking with the fatigue of his hundred and twenty summers, submitting without a murmur to the buffetings of his coquettish granddaughter, "Ida"; "Rose," a fat, gluttonous, middle-aged dame, and "Palm," her husband, with his great indolently humorous face—an entirely respectable bourgeois ménage; "Nick," the youngster, always squealing and stealing the hay; "Tim," the monster elephant, restlessly rolling his vicious white-rimmed eye (he had killed a man some six months ago); impatient, irascible, and sullenly watchful of his little wife "Tiny," the beauty of the band, jealously marching by her side on the road, with his trunk around her neck, and in the evenings, rumbling to himself with pride, as he scraped her down with the jagged edge of an old condensed-milk tin.

* * *

Midday—The post had just come in. The manager, a freckled, sandy-haired young man, was giving out the letters in the dressing-room, sitting swinging his long legs on an elephant-tub, with his hat jammed tight on the back of his head. One by one the men came forward; some sheepishly, some jauntily, some with tremulous eagerness. And the more illiterate ones remained loitering at the mouth of the tent, hesitatingly fingering their envelopes, curiously revolving them, trying to decipher the post-marks. Sam Giddens, the clown, a bald, thick-set, elderly gentleman, adjusted his gold-rimmed spectacles, and plunged into a copy of the *Era*. Quito, the jockey, and the two tumbling boys were discussing the incidents of the journey.

"'E got me doun, smashed my 'at in, and tore my coat a'most off my back," Tommy was explaining.

"What, the black horse?"

"Yes, that black swine."

* * * * *

"I can't stand this country. All the women look to me like men, and all the men like women. I saw about thirty of them loading a waggon of wheat this morning. It's barbarous, that's what it is," remarked Miss Lucile, the wire-walker.

"And the way the people bathe too, men and women all together; I call it disgustin'," Quito declared.

"I niver see'd sich a country for rain. It's Mister Tommy de Lo all day long."

"And d'ye mind how before we started they were all for telling how the sun was always shining in la belle France?"

"It's a dreary place, I call it, niver a Sunday from month end to month end," chimed in old Mrs. Chigwin, as she settled her fringe. "This 'ull be the first year for nine years that I've missed Bank Holiday at Portsmouth. You see no life here—no great crowds trippin' about, enjoyin' of themselves. Oh dear, oh dear, what would I jest give to be 'ome agin—nice clean lodgings and a bit of fresh steak," she concluded mournfully.

"I reckon it 'ud be a lot better if we could pick up the lingo. I can't get beyond 'quatre sous cognac,'" broke in the vet.

"Ah! you'd learn that quick enough in Chinese, doctor."

"I only joined the show five months ago, when they came tenting in France," the old man remarked, turning to me. "I've had a proper college education, though you might'n't think it, and fine business down at Reading. Many's the year, I tell you, that I've turned over more than two thousand pounds. This has been a terrible come-down for me."

"What was the trouble?" I asked.

"Drink, young man, drink," he answered warningly, "and for

for eighteen months before I joined them I hadn't earned a penny."

He looked it, bloated and aged and enfeebled before his time.

* * * * *

Meanwhile the ring-master went on :—

"And when we got to the bridge, the horses got frightened and wouldn't cross. All at once the waggon gives a great bump and Sam begins calling out that we'd fallen into the river and swimming for his life about the waggon floor. Didn't you, Sam ?"

But the clown, deep in his paper, made no answer.

* * * * *

"Hulloa, Sandow, who's bin makin' your face up this time ?" asked the manager, as the hulking saddler sauntered up for a newspaper, with a bruised eye and an ugly, swollen nose.

"It be Jacko agin, sir. He were drunk agin at t' start, and when I went fur to wake him, he sets on me, with the result what you all kin see."

"What did you do to him ?"

The big man lifted his heavy shoulders.

"I jest chucked him oot o' t' waggon. That be the wirst o' having my strength. If I was a mite o' a chap like him" (pointing to Quito), "I'd have given him the grandest hiding he'd iver experienced. Yes, that I would, yer damned little varmint," he added, as Jacko, a wizened, impish creature not five feet high, appeared grinning behind him.

* * * * *

"Circus-life ! circus-life !" the old doctor philosophised to me confidentially, wiping his beery eyes. "It's bin a terrible come-down for me."

* * *

1.30 *p.m.*—"The parade's better than the show. The show's right enough, you know; but the parade's A1," Lieutenant George had declared.

The band, in red coats and firemen's helmets, led the way, packed in a car all gilt and glittering glass, drawn by ten plumed piebald horses. Next, on prancing, plum-coloured steeds, eighteen ladies, sumptuously attired in plush and satin and heavy brocade. Then the thoroughbreds, and the ten trick ponies, tight-reined, arching their necks and tossing their silky manes, led by foot-grooms in scarlet livery. Behind these, the four monumental gilded cars — allegorical representations of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales—each drawn by eight white horses, and carrying on its pinnacle a golden-haired girl reclining in appropriate attitudes. Behind them followed the team of elephants (with the coons dressed in tiger-skins sitting in scarlet howdahs on their backs), dragging the lions' cage with Lieutenant George in full uniform, inside amongst the beasts, smoking and twirling his freshly waxed moustache. Next, escorted by a cavalcade of tent-men, dressed as Turkish grandees, the six tableaux—monster paintings relating the appearance of the show before Her Gracious Majesty the Queen in the midst of a tropical forest. And lastly the tigers, the camels, the dromedary, and the three painted pay-waggons.

Every window was packed with faces: the streets were swarming with people. I rode through the town, perched on the box of the gilded band-car (I had been ordered there in case of difficulties with the local police), bowing to the crowd from side to side, and feeling like an Eastern potentate at the head of his triumphal progress.

* * *

8.30 *p.m.*—The afternoon show had done fair business; but in the

the evening the boss and the manager sat in their shirt-sleeves at the windows of the pay-waggons, struggling in desperation to keep pace with the demands of the surging crowd.

Inside, the flaring petroleum lights flickered over a dim, circular wall of upturned faces. A dull, continuous hum of voices filled the tent—over three thousand had been packed inside; and when the overture struck up, they were turning people away from the doors.

I wandered away, in the face of the driving rain, through the narrow, empty streets. Here and there, through a lighted window, I caught a glimpse of a family group, sitting round a shaded lamp, the women at their needlework, the fishermen smoking over a crumpled newspaper. The muffled strains of the band, playing "Nancy Lee," carried past me on the wind, grew fainter and fainter, and presently died away altogether.

And before me, all wrapped in darkness, the sea lay sullenly lashing the shore; to the east a lighthouse glimmered, and near at hand, moving quite slowly through the night, passed the three lights of a steamer.

We were to start at three to-morrow morning. The night looked ugly; out in the channel a heavy gale was blowing; the sky was starless and black as pitch.

* * *

11 *p.m.*—Maggie had spread us our supper on a table built of piled forage, and round it we took our places, each sitting astride a hay-truss. To-night she was busy with discreet attentions towards the lieutenant; for he had had a lot of trouble with one of his lions, and it was the talk of all the tents.

"Yes, he was a bit obstinate, wasn't he, Joe? I had a job to get inside the cage, him standing over the door pawing at me. That's

That's the way with lions," he went on, turning to me, "as long as you're below them, they all make to jump on you, but once get above them and they just slink and snarl at your feet."

"I reckon there's some human beings what isn't much different," remarked Maggie.

"No, there's no life insurance in our trade. Pass the salt, Joe, old man," the lieutenant concluded.

Outside, the wind was hooting through the camp, banging against the side of the tent, and at intervals lifting the side-poles off the ground. And the huge, vague shapes of the elephants swayed uneasily in the fitful flare of the hissing petroleum light, their trunks, like black, hungry serpents, swinging incessantly across the gangway.

After supper, Joe and Maggie wished us good-night. George and I stayed drowsily chatting of the day's gossip, and of the storm that was raging without. By-and-bye we lay down on the hay, to sleep till the watchman should come on his rounds. . . .

. . . Gradually I became conscious of Joe's voice beside me; then a ringing peal of Maggie's laughter. I opened my eyes: the tent was still dark. I could hear the tramp of feet outside, and the distant neighing of horses.

All at once the hay seemed to tremble beneath me, and something rough and wet and living touched my hand. I sprang up: above me loomed a great black form.

"Hulloa, where's his bed got to?" I heard Maggie laughing, while Joe shouted:

"Rose, get back, yer greedy beast."

She had got loose in the night, and whilst I slept had been standing over me, craftily stealing the hay from beneath me, till at length I was lying on the bare, dusty ground.

* * *

Tuesday,

Tuesday, 2.30 *a.m.*—The rain was rattling against the sides of the tent. Joe and "Scottie" were moving the elephants out. Tim was trumpeting at the top of his voice, and trying to drag the tent down about our ears.

The whole camp seemed a scene of hopeless, indescribable confusion. The men were all shouting to one another in the darkness. Every gust of the gale was extinguishing the petroleum lights. I wandered about in search of Jim, stumbling over the tent-ropes, splashing into pools of standing water, jostling against huddled groups of men vainly endeavouring to rekindle their lights. It was rumoured that half the show had already started, and that the "boss" had been knocked on the head by a falling tent-pole. The rain was falling in torrents. I caught a glimpse of the ladies scurrying under their umbrellas to their omnibus, old Sam Giddens among them, wrapped in a multitude of horse-blankets.

It was half-an-hour before I found the buggy, and could hear Jim's voice bellowing close at hand.

One of the leaders of the last tableau team lay kicking on the ground, entangled in his traces. Jim was cursing the driver as he had never cursed before. We all lent a hand. I sat on the horse's head, while the others worked at the straps. Of a sudden the light went out. The horse started plunging: I was pitched into a pool of water; and when we could see again the animal had kicked himself clear.

We were the last to leave. Drenched to the skin, with the buggy-hood down, despite the rain, lest the wind should overturn us, we crawled up the hill on to the cliffs. The trees were all writhing in the gale; below us, with a dull, continuous roar, the surf was crashing against the rocks. Jim had been drinking heavily; before we had gone half-a-mile, he was rolling in his sleep. The light behind the buggy was the only one still alight.

At

At every turning, till we were clear of the town, I stood up, holding it aloft, trying to decipher the sign-posts. And then, when I had found the road, and we were out in the open country, I let the mare jog along at her own pace, and sat helplessly shivering and waiting for the sunrise.

About four it seemed to be growing lighter. I turned back down the line, and found the last waggon lagging more than a mile behind. I shouted to the driver, but he gave me no answer. He was either dead drunk or numbed by the wet. I shook Jim till my arms ached, and when I had waked him, told him the trouble. We both sat bawling in concert, and at last extracted a feeble, incoherent answer. We stopped the waggon, and shouted to the man to come down; he answered thickly that his arms were stiff with cramp. I cantered back to the tack-waggon, roused a couple of coons, and with their help we lifted the man down. Then we battered at the door of a wayside cottage, till the terrified inhabitants let us in. We lit a straw fire, and tried with brandy and rubbing to bring him round. But he had been badly drunk the night before, and the liquor had taken all the warmth out of him. So we stowed him away on a hay bed in the tack-waggon, set the boy who was driving the foals on the box of the tableau, and I mounted the thoroughbred in his place.

The day was now breaking; and we were at least four miles behind. Jim lashed the tableau team into a hand-gallop, and I followed behind in charge of the foals.

About six o'clock we came up with the elephants, slouching silently along, and tearing up the corn by the roadside as they went. . . . An hour later we rejoined the rest of the show, and at half-past eight we could see the wet roofs of Fécamp twinkling in the distance.

* * *

It

It was a regular ceremony; it took place every morning behind the small horse-tent. The doctor sat on the steps of the harness waggon, and the tent-men lounged round him in groups. He would knock the ashes carefully from his pipe, wipe his beery eyes, and clear his throat authoritatively before unfurling the *Standard*. He would begin at the top right-hand column of the inside page, reading mechanically almost right through the paper —the political speeches, the police news, the foreign telegrams, the theatrical notices, and the sporting intelligence—till he had come again to the advertisements. No one made any comment; the tent-men just loitered and listened; and when he had finished, they strolled away silently, as they had come. The scene, in its droll solemnity, struck me as curiously pathetic.

* * *

The "boss" was a podgy, thick-set little man; he had a ruddy moustache, and a merry twinkle in his small, round eyes. His clothes were always ragged, and smeared with mud; for a clean shirt, I fancy, he professed a convinced contempt. With every one, down to the youngest stable-boy, he was familiar and friendly; but, when he was roused, no one—not even Jim, the stud-groom —could compete with him in the matter of swearing. This "born gift" of his, as the men called it, had long ago won him universal respect. He lived in a luxurious waggon, the fittings of which had cost three hundred guineas. His father had been a circus proprietor before him. It was said that he was worth two hundred thousand pounds; and every morning he would strip and help the men hammer in the tent-pegs.

Mr. Henderson, the trick rider, shared the "boss's" waggon. He shaved every morning, wore clean cuffs, folded trousers, and glistening

glistening patent-leather boots, and carried a gold-topped malacca. But the fact that his expletives began with the fourth instead of the second letter of the alphabet, stamped him, so everyone agreed, as a gentleman with a college education.

The men never mixed with the inhabitants of the towns, for none of them knew any French. At Dieppe, twenty-five of them had given notice ; at Havre half of the orchestra were to leave us. Almost everyone was suffering from acute home-sickness ; after the evening show the tent-men would sit round the petroleum lights smoking and eternally chatting of England.

A few kept a perfunctory route-book ; but most of them, when we set out in the morning, had never troubled to learn the name of the town where we had spent the day. Their life was almost entirely centred in the busy routine of the camp.

Wednesday, 5 *a.m.*—It was a short stage from Fécamp to Etretat ; and as we got upon the road, the sun was already flooding the sky with crimson light. Beneath us the sea lay spread like a blue, wide, empty plain ; by the roadside the reapers were hurrying to their work amid the corn-sheaves ; the crowds were busy loading the long-bodied, four-wheeled Normandy waggons.

The wind had dropped, swelling milk-white clouds hung overhead. Every village was thronged with peasants, waiting to watch us go past. The fresh, warm rays of the morning sun crept through me, bringing a keen, exquisite exhilaration. And there returned my old instinctive affection for the terse picturesqueness of the so-called lower classes. And I remembered, with a twinge of bitter regret, that at the Havre I must leave them to journey

journey on without me over the continent day after day and year after year. . . . I felt I would be content to become one of them, to share irrevocably their rough, roving life.

11 *a.m.*—The "boss" had promised "Jacko" a medal as champion sleeper. He travelled in charge of the drove of hospital horses, and slept the journey through, lying flat on his face on the back of the old ring-mare, with a horse-rug thrown over his head.

When, this morning at the start, Jim hauled him unceremoniously to the ground, and set him to drive the last tableau-team, he screwed up his tiny bloodshot eyes, and swore he would be revenged.

He was supposed to be running after Maggie, and Joe, whenever he found him hiding in the hay in the elephant-tent, used to thrash him and throw him outside.

We were all sitting at breakfast, when, to our surprise, the stunted, impish creature sauntered in, puffing ostentatiously at a cigar-stump.

"Well, Jacko, did yer 'ave a good sleep on the road?" Maggie asked maliciously.

"What d'ye think I did?" he asked, his wizened face grinning from side to side. "Why I've bin an' knocked a bloomin' 'ouse down."

And so, it appeared, he had. They had bustled him down the long hill into the town, and he had swung the waggon with a crash into a cottage, built of rubble and mud, and had knocked a huge hole in the wall.

"A lot of old women were sittin' at breakfast. Lord! 'ow they did jump and squeal," Jacko continued, with pride.

Then,

Then, catching Joe's eyes, and moving warily to the tent-mouth, he added, chuckling,

"The coves 'ave sent in a claim for five hundred francs damages. That'll teach Mister Jim to set me drivin' 'is blasted tableaux."

And off he swaggered to tell the tale of his prowess to the coons and around the horse-tents.

* * *

6 *p.m.*—When we came in to tea, after the day-show, we found Scottie, busy before a cracked mirror combing his sandy locks. He looked more unkempt than ever; his face was streaming, for he had been helping to drag the lions' cage out of the ring, and the stubble of a three days' beard covered his chin. When Maggie asked him to build up a table for us, he retorted excitedly: "Can ye na see that I'm busy?" and recommenced desperately the parting of his hair.

"What's up, Pimples, going courtin'?" asked the lieutenant.

"I'm engaged to conduct a party o' ladies round the establishment. I'll be standin' you boys drinks at the buffy when I git back."

He hurried off, clapping the "lieutenant's" forage-cap on the back of his head. Presently we heard him grandiloquently pushing back the crowd of loafers, and at the tent-mouth we caught a fluttering glimpse of white skirts and lace parasols.

"This, ladies," Scottie began, stroking poor old Jim's inoffensive trunk, "this elephant be two hundred and thirty year of age. He's often very ferocious, as yer kin see by the red in his eye. It takes fifty powerful men to hold him when he's fashed. Over there, ladies, the handsome gent with the moustache, sitting on the hay, that's Mr. Lieutenant George Armstrong, the celebrated

brated wild-beast tamer, who's performed before all the crowned and uncrowned heads o' Europe. A remarkable shy man, ladies, though his looks belie him. He started lion-tamin' at the age of twelve, and he'll be eaten alive some day as sure as I'm standin' here. This be 'Tim' the biggest elephant in any circus. He killed the last under-keeper, an Irishman, and that's why I'm here now. There's a tremendous lot o' courage required in our trade, ladies, as ye kin all see for yerselves," Scottie continued, straightening himself with a spasmodic attempt at gravity. "Now, this way, if you please. If ye'll follow me, I show ye the horse-tents and the seventeen Arabian horses that the Sultan of China gave with his own hands to Mr. Henderson. . . ."

We had finished tea before he reappeared, ruefully displaying a coin in the palm of his hand.

"Fivepence," he burst out, "and I shewed 'em over the whole bloomin' show and told 'em many a thousand lies. . . . Fivepence," and he threw the coin ferociously into the hay.

* * *

Thursday, 3 *a.m.*—"You're late, young man, very late," said the manager reprovingly. "Jim's been gone this hour past. He waited half an hour for you, and then had to take on Didon, the Frenchman who drives the 'bus, to help him find the road. We're dreadfully short of drivers. I don't know how we're going to manage."

We stood watching the departure of the blacksmith's waggon. The sky was glittering with stars, a couple of petroleum lights were swinging aimlessly in the distance; the camp seemed almost empty.

"Didn't I tell you you'd oversleep yourself, if you didn't get to bed,

bed, instead of sitting up playing poker with Silvado ? " the manager went on. " Look here," he added suddenly, " you'd better take the 'bus. You're accustomed to driving ? "

" Yes, but not four horses," I objected.

" Never mind, jump up. Keep your wheelers well in hand, and the cream cob off the pole, or he'll start kicking."

Behind the blacksmith's waggon, the 'bus team was being harnessed, while I could vaguely perceive the huddled forms of the sleeping ladies. My heart was full of pity for them as I mounted the box.

I had just steered out of the gateway, to my surprise, without a spill, when through the darkness I heard the boss's voice. " Wake 'em up there, Didon. What're yer up to. Shove 'em along." And, running alongside the team with his stock-whip, he set them off at a hand-gallop.

We swung round the corner into the main road, the 'bus lurching heavily as we bumped over the kerb-stone. From within floated a muffled series of feminine screams. . . .

And then, on we rattled through the night, through the dark stillness of the sleeping country. . . .

* * *

6 *a.m.*—" Stop at the bottom of the hill ; you've got a shoe loose," shouted one of the boys, galloping alongside.

I listened, but I could hear no clinking of flapping steel ; every horse was going as sound as a bell.

" No, they're all right enough," I called back.

" There's a buffy at the bottom," retorted the boy.

I remembered that there was a half-crown fine for stopping for drinks on the road, and that a lame horse or a shoe loose was the only

only excuse accepted. So when we reached the wayside inn I pulled up.

"What's up?" called a voice through the glass.

"Shoe loose, doctor," I answered.

The next moment he was on the road beside the team.

"Where's the buffy?" he asked.

I pointed with the whip to the house, and soon some half-dozen of us were sitting in the kitchen, and they were standing me coffee and cognac all round.

* * *

8 *a.m.*—The shipping of the Havre was in sight—a delicate tracery against the sky, like a distant winter forest. Beyond, across the river, wrapped in pale blue haze, stretched the cliffs of Honfleur, and the offing, all shimmering in the sunlight, lay studded with snow-white sails. . . .

With the skid on, we swung down the long hill into the city.

And as we pushed our way through the streets, tight-packed with a staring crowd, and bawled unceremoniously at the local police, and forced the irate tram-drivers to retreat till there was space for us to pass them, and searched at every turning to the right and to the left for the square where we were to camp, I realised more than ever the exhilarating charm of this reckless, adventurous life.

* * *

Havre, 9.30 *a.m.*—He was a little French cabin-boy. He had deserted his ship, and had followed the show from Dieppe. He used to explain to us with pride how, if he were caught, he would get forty-eight days' imprisonment. His clothes were a mass of filthy rags. I gave him a pair of trousers, and he stole my cigarettes.

He

He was always ravenously hungry, and would work till his face was streaming for a crust of bread. His devotion to Joe was untiring; every day he ran the whole journey alongside the elephants, belabouring "Rose" with an old bit of bamboo. And all the afternoon he used to fight the town-urchins who came swarming round the tent-edge to tease the elephants. He confided to me his passion for the circus, and his longing to become a tamer of lions, like George; and I promised to ask the manager to give him a start.

When this afternoon the police caught him and carried him off, he cried very bitterly, and swore he would come back to us.

* * *

10.30 *a.m.*—"Scottie" sat by the tent-mouth with his head between his hands. I bid him good morning; he made no answer. The others were at breakfast.

"What's up with 'Scottie'?" I asked.

"He was drunk at the start this morning," Joe replied, curtly.

"I wasna," "Scottie" retorted sullenly. "I'd just had one single cognac."

"I felt downright sorry for that little French lad," Joe went on.

"Dirty little runaway beast. It just served him right. I couldn't abide 'im sneaking about the tent," Maggie burst out.

"Come, don't be funny," growled Joe.

Maggie swung round on her hay-truss, turning her back on him.

"Joe's that snappy," she explained to me tearfully.

"Snappy! so'd you be, if you'd seen the job I had to get that big brute (indicating Tim) on to the road this morning, and that darned Scotchman stumbling all over the shop half boozed."

"I wasna,

"I wasna, I tell yer. . . . It's a blasted lie," "Scottie" protested in a husky voice.

"Look yer here," Joe interrupted, "if yer can't keep a civil tongue in yer head, yer can jest clear out o' the tent."

The situation was growing strained. The heat was terrific; we were encamped in a small dusty square in a low quarter of the city, and before the first tent-peg had been driven in, the ground was swarming with roughs. There had been a lot of fighting, and the "boss" and Jim had been cursing themselves hoarse. Everyone, as George mildly expressed it, was "just a bit put out."

"Ain't it sickly, the 'eat in this tent?" Maggie remarked. "I feel that upset——," and she cast a sidelong glance in Joe's direction, but he went on scowling and munching his bread and butter.

"No, you don't care, you great selfish lout; you think of nothing but them stinkin' elephants, and getting yer own breakfast comfortable."

The "lieutenant" winked at me from his corner, and helped himself to some more bacon. Maggie was on the verge of tears, and Joe was desperately gulping down his breakfast.

"Come, Maggie, have a bite o' somethin'," he began, sheepishly, after a pause.

She shook her head violently.

"Give her time, Joe, old man," advised the "lieutenant."

A few minutes later Joe asked again.

"Ain't yer goin' to have nothin'?"

She dissented faintly.

Joe rose, and putting on his coat, moved towards the tent-mouth.

"Well, I'm going out," he exclaimed, with forced carelessness.

"Because you've lost your temper with me, Joe, you needn't make yourself unsociable all round," Maggie called after him.

"I was going to get yer some fresh water. I see yer can's empty," he answered, reproachfully.

"Oh, there ain't no 'urry for that. Sit down and 'ave a fresh cup o' tea."

She faced round again, smiling through her tears, and filled up his cup, while the "lieutenant" went on winking and rolling himself a cigarette.

"An' Pimples," Maggie asked presently, "shall 'e 'ave this bit o' bacon what's left over?"

Joe shrugged his broad shoulders with an assumption of contemptuous indifference.

"Scottie," Maggie called, "'ere's a bit o' bacon for yer."

"I'm na goin' to tak' charity at my time o' life," the little man shouted, and, rising, strode defiantly out of the tent.

* * *

5.30 *p.m.*—The show was packed. The band was playing "Nancy Lee;" Quito, in his flesh-coloured tights, was cantering round the ring, and the children were roaring with laughter as Sam Giddens banged the boss over the head with a bladder.

For the last time I strolled through the tents. Outside the dressing-room I found "Jacko" kneeling on the ground, busy pasting the paper hoops; beside the tableaux the coons were fighting a gang of over-inquisitive dock-labourers, ousting them from the camp with a heavy volley of broken British oaths; and on the steps of the harness waggon the old doctor sat watching them, moodily puffing at his short black pipe. The "lieutenant" was waxing his coal-black moustache; Joe and "Scottie" were amicably harnessing

harnessing "Tim" to the lions' cage; within the elephant tent Maggie was boiling the water for tea, and laying the cloth on the piled trusses of hay.

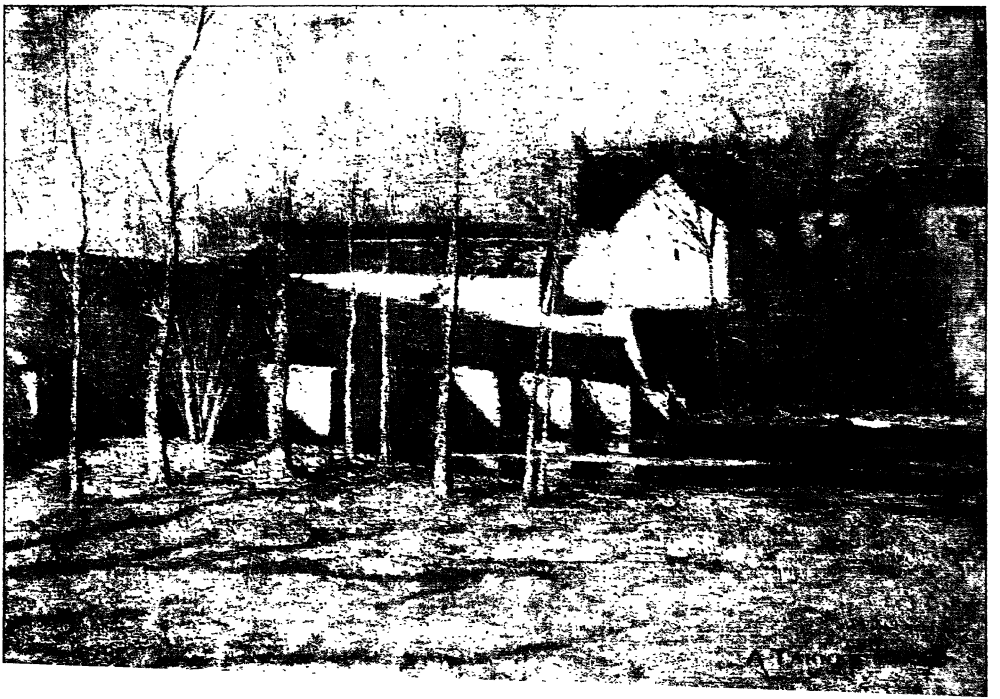
One after another I bid them good-bye, strangely reluctant to leave them, childishly eager to prolong indefinitely this short moment of departure. The "lieutenant" and I promised to write regularly to one another, and we hurriedly arranged how we would meet again next year in the South.

Then I pushed my way through the crowd of loungers that surrounded the camp, and turned slowly away down the boulevard towards the railway station.

Twenty minutes later, as my train steamed out of the city, I could hear the distant wavering strains of the band, and I could see the sunlight glinting on the white, bulging canvas of the big show-tent.

On the Loing

By A. Tanner



Last Fires

By Lily Thicknesse

WHEN all the passion and the pain
That forged our flesh and spirit one
Are past, and sweet desire is vain,
And youth and hope and life are gone,

Will then our end be like the west,
Where sunset fires have paled to gloom,
But give their gorgeous crimson's best
To light with splendour day's long doom ?

Ah, then, when we must die, we two
Claim the dear earth and solemn sky
As comrades in the way we go,
From dawn to night's dark mystery.

An Old Campaigner

By Walter Langley

An Old Campaigner

By Walter Langley



Life and Death

By Ellis J. Wynne

LIFE is a desert drear,
A sandy plain ;
A waste, a wild career
For phantom forms of Fear,
Sorrow and Pain.
No guide hath man, no guide—
Self must on self confide ;
No hand to lead him on,
No hope to rest upon—
Nought but the grave !
Man veils his eyes, and lo, blind Phantasy
Sits at her loom and weaves a sacred mystery,
A magic woof of dreams—glad dreams of liberty—
To mock a slave !

And Death ? Ah Death's a sage
Who stills our fears ;
Our doubts and faiths engage
The wisdom of his age—
And eke our tears.

Hushed

Hushed in expectancy
We stake life's paltry fee ;
A last-drawn sigh, a sleep,
And Death calls "Laugh," or "Weep,"—
'Tis then we know
Thy form aright, O Master ! from the guise
Of Life's prim pageant, Thee, with unsealed eyes—
Sum of our hopes or fears—we recognise
For weal or woe !

Martha

By Mrs. Murray Hickson

I

FROM the first day that she came to Underwood Terrace Martha interested me. She arrived, I remember, one dull November afternoon. I saw her pass down the street, peering, in a short-sighted fashion, at the numbers over the doors. She carried a large bonnet-box in one hand and a neat brown paper parcel in the other. She had no umbrella, and the rain dripped from the limp brim of her large straw hat. Her skirt, shabby and worn, had slipped from her overladen fingers and dragged upon the muddy pavement. I don't know why I noticed her, but, as I glanced up from my book, my eyes fell upon her forlorn little figure, and I felt that sudden, curious sensation of pity which sometimes, we don't know why, takes us by the throat and shakes us out of our egotism and self-reflection. Very possibly my first interest in her was merely a matter of mood. Perhaps, had I been happier myself, I should not have taken much notice of her; but my own concerns appeared, just then, so dull and grey that it was a relief to turn from them to the contemplation of somebody else's. For the present, however, the little figure in the draggled black frock

frock wandered down the street, and I, returning to my book, lost sight and thought of her.

In the drawing-room, before dinner, Mrs. Norris explained to me that, in consideration of the arrival of a new boarder, she had engaged a girl as a sort of "understudy" for the other servants, and to work between them in the capacity of general help and factotum. The girl was young, she came from Surrey, and her name was Martha. Mrs. Norris hoped that she would turn out well, but the training of young girls was always an experiment; she had known few who repaid the trouble expended upon them. This much she told me—the rest I supplied for myself. Help, in our overworked household, was imperatively needed, and a girl from the country (despite the drawbacks of her ignorance and lack of training) would cost little in keep and less in wages. In fact, properly managed, she should prove a good investment.

Late that evening I met a quaint little figure upon the stairs, and instantly recognised the limp, broad-brimmed hat, and the shabby jacket, frayed at collar and at cuffs. Our new maid-servant and the girl who had that afternoon attracted my attention in the street represented the same identity. She drew aside to let me pass, shrinking timidly against the wall; but, by a sudden impulse, I stopped and spoke to her. The gas-light fell on the glasses of her spectacles, so that I could not catch the expression of her large, short-sighted eyes; but I saw that the eyelids were red and swollen and I guessed that she had been crying.

"So you found the house after all," I said. "You must have got very wet out there in the rain."

"Yes, m'm," she answered, and saluted me with a quick, bobbing curtesy. She expressed no curiosity as to how I came to know that she had at first been unable, in the driving mist, to discover number 127. To girls of her class, knowledge on every subject, whether

whether important or trivial, appears, in a lady, as a matter of course. I looked at her again, and it struck me that, in the house, she should wear a cap and apron. But her dress remained unchanged since the afternoon.

"You are not going out now?" I said, "so late? And it is still raining. Listen, you can hear it on the skylight."

She listened obediently. The rain, blown by a gusty wind, pattered upon the big skylight in the roof. Martha glanced at me from behind her spectacles.

"Yes, m'm, but the mistress told me to post this letter. After that I may go to bed."

She held a fat, square envelope in her ungloved fingers, and I knew, without looking at it, that it contained the usual daily letter from Amy Norris to her lover. I moved impatiently. Why could not the girl have written earlier in the afternoon?—this going out to catch the late post was an old grievance with the servants, and now I supposed both of them would thrust the distasteful duty upon Martha.

"But do you know the way?" I asked.

"Yes, thank you, m'm," she answered, and slipped down the stairs away from me.

Before I went to bed that night I ventured on a sketchy remonstrance with Amy Norris upon this subject of the late post.

"The girl is young, and evidently country-bred," I concluded. "Don't you think it's a pity to send her out so late into the streets? Could we not all get our letters ready for the last post before dinner?"

Amy looked at me in amazement. She was good-hearted enough, but perfectly stolid and unapproachable when such small matters as this were in question, and consideration for servants was quite beyond her comprehension.

"The

"The pillar-box is only three or four minutes' walk from here," she said. "Besides, one can't plan things out like that, beforehand —it would be a perfect nuisance. It won't do the girl any harm; Eliza always used to go."

Eliza was a former servant. She was pretty and feather-brained, and when she left our house some few months earlier, Mrs. Norris had refused to give her a character. The reason, no doubt, was unanswerable, but the fault had appeared to me to lie with the mistress as much as with the maid.

I thought of Eliza, looked at Amy's plump, satisfied countenance and laughed a little by way of reply. Long experience had taught me that argument and explanation here—in Mrs. Norris' boarding-house—were entirely useless weapons.

As I was preparing for bed, I wondered idly if Martha had found her way safely back, and where she was to sleep. I knew there was only one room available for the servants, and I supposed that she was to share it with the cook and the housemaid. The child interested me; there was about her an unconscious earnestness which appealed to me. Her face was stamped with that expression, at once piteous and irritating, which is the result of a slow but conscientious nature striving its utmost to keep level with the demands made upon it by quicker minds. This first night away from home and in the midst of new surroundings would be very trying for the girl. My thoughts dwelt on her for a brief space and then, turning inevitably towards my own affairs, they dropped her out of their consideration. Presently, I lit a candle and went up to the box-room, where, amongst other things, I had stored away several books, one of which I particularly wanted to read. The box-room was at the top of the house, and was reached by a short staircase, so steep as to be almost a ladder. From the top of this ladder, which was of bare deal, uncarpeted, you stepped directly

directly into the box-room itself, on one side of which was a dark recess holding a large cistern for water. To-night as I came to the foot of the stairs, I could hear the water gurgling through the pipes into the great tank, and caught an intermittent sound of rain upon the window in the sloping roof. A light shone from the top of the staircase; evidently somebody was there before me, and I blew out my candle ere climbing the ladder. It was late, the house was very still, and I wondered who had thus invaded my territory, for, as my bedroom was small, I kept many things stowed away in my big travelling trunk, and I often came up here to fetch what, at the moment, I required. When my eyes were level with the floor of the box-room I stopped suddenly, and I understood. The room had been turned into a bedchamber. Trunks and portmanteaus were piled along one side of the wall, and a small—very small—truckle bedstead stood underneath the skylight. One chair and a broken-down chest of drawers completed the furniture. A small square of looking-glass cracked across one corner, hung upon the wall. Martha herself knelt beside the bed, her face hidden in the pillow. Her loosened hair—crisp, and bright chestnut in colour—streamed over her coarse white night-gown; her bare feet, as she knelt, were thrust out from beneath the hem. I stood a moment, and then, for the girl had neither heard nor seen me, crept cautiously down the steep stairs back to the landing below. I would go without my book to-night, for Martha was saying her prayers, and, to judge by the convulsive movement of her shoulders, Martha was also crying.

II

A week later our new lady-boarder arrived, and a very fine lady she was. We, the older occupants of the establishment, shrank into

into insignificance beside her; her gowns were so smart, and her requirements were so many. Now came the time of Martha's trial, and, poor child, a severe ordeal it proved to be. She was called upon, without any previous training, and with no help beyond her own native wits, to wait at the dinner-table. I must say that Martha's wits (being, though tenacious, somewhat slow) at times failed her; but, on the whole, it seemed to me that she did very well indeed, especially as Mrs. Norris, during the dinner hour, confiscated her spectacles, so that she was obliged to find her way about the room in that semi-mist which blurs the vision of very short-sighted people. Her appearance, however, as her mistress justly observed, was enormously improved thereby; and her eyes, albeit often red and swollen with much weeping, were so well-shaped and charmingly fringed with long lashes that one could hardly regret the absence of the ugly, though useful, glasses. Poor little Martha! She used to hand the dishes, I remember, with awkward haste and alacrity, born of an earnest desire to give satisfaction and to succeed. Her cheeks were flushed, her small hands a trifle tremulous; her hair—usually dragged back from her forehead and twisted into a tight knot behind—had become, by this time in the evening, slightly loosened: here and there a stray curl crept above her brow. She was still very shabby; and in consequence of much hard work and little leisure, her hands, I noticed, had lost their first appearance of cleanliness, and become permanently roughened and begrimed. But, in spite of this, I began to look upon Martha as quite a pretty girl.

She did not have a particularly good time of it, I am afraid; she was far too sweet-tempered and anxious to conciliate everybody. Most of the hard words of the household, and a good deal of its concentrated ill-temper, fell to her share, and was borne by her

her with uncomplaining patience. Now and again—for Martha was occasionally both slow and uncomprehending—I myself felt tempted to speak sharply to her; but something in the expression of her earnest little face, some unconscious pathos in her personality, restrained me. Gradually, as the weeks passed, I found myself more and more interested in her—once or twice almost painfully so.

One day in particular, I remember, things had gone awry with Martha from morning until night. She let fall, and smashed to atoms, a vegetable dish which she was handing to her mistress at luncheon. Mrs. Norris was, naturally, much annoyed, and the poor girl went through the rest of her duties with burning cheeks, and an increased clumsiness of manner. Afterwards I heard one of the other servants scolding her about a fire which had been allowed to die out, and, later in the evening, I found her in the hall, undergoing a severe reprimand from Amy Norris, whose nightly letter she had dropped into the mud on her way to the post.

"It isn't only that," said Amy, with concentrated scorn and annoyance. "Though such stupidity is bad enough, goodness knows. But she must needs bring the letter back again, to show to me—as if that would do any good! And now she's missed the post from the pillar-box. Isn't it inconceivable?"

As the last few words were addressed to me, I nodded in reply. It certainly did appear inconceivable—I should have posted the letter and said nothing about it.

Amy rubbed the envelope vigorously with her handkerchief.

"I thought, Miss, I'd better tell you about it, I thought perhaps you'd like to write it over again," said Martha, submissively.

"You thought—you thought—you've no business to think," snapped

snapped Amy. She turned into the dining-room to re-write the address. The front door was open, and the gas-light from the hall streamed out into the night. The steps were shining with wet; because of the fog, one could hardly see beyond them. The street, at this time, was almost deserted, but the throb and roar of a big London thoroughfare close at hand came to us through the darkness.

I looked at Martha, who stood waiting beside me. She was pale, and I noticed that she shifted wearily from one foot to the other as though too tired to rest her weight upon either. Before, however, I had time to say more than a hasty word to her, Amy came back with the letter.

"You must go to the Post-office now," she said. "Be quick, Martha, don't lose a moment."

The girl ran hastily down the steps, and Amy shut the door behind her,

"Stupid little thing," she said vexedly. "She seems always to be doing something idiotic. I really don't see how we are to keep her."

I should like to have represented the matter from my point of view, but upon other people's affairs, silence is presumably golden; therefore I held my peace.

Martha's cup had been so full all day that, when she came to my room with hot water at bed-time, a kindly word or two overcame her completely. She set down the hot water can, and mopped her streaming eyes with a crumpled pocket-handkerchief. I waited till her sobs became less suffocating. Presently she stammered an excuse and an explanation. The mistress, it appeared, had called her into her room half an hour earlier, and, complaining that her only black gown was too shabby for daily wear, had commanded her to buy another with the least possible delay.

delay. Also the broken vegetable dish must be made good out of her next month's wages.

"I can't do it, m'm, indeed I can't," she said, breathlessly; "I don't have but seven pound a year; and I've got to help mother all I can. Father died just before I came here, and mother has four children besides me to look after; she's not strong either, isn't mother."

"Your frock *is* shabby, Martha," I said severely; "it's shiny at the seams and frayed at the hem. As for the vegetable dish—well, you break a lot of things, you know, and Mrs. Norris is not rich enough to replace them."

Martha sniffed sadly.

"But white caps and aprons do run into money," she remarked, with apparent irrelevance, and turned towards the door to depart. Her head drooped disconsolately, her tired feet dragged as she walked.

"Martha," said I, "stop a minute, and come here."

She came back at once, standing before me with tear-stained cheeks; her breath, like that of a grieving child, caught now and again in a vagrant, shivering sob.

I meant to give myself the luxury of a kindness, and Martha the pleasure of a new gown.

"The vegetable dish," said I, "you must replace yourself; but the frock I will give to you. I will buy the stuff, and we must find somebody who can make it up for you nicely. But, if I do this, you must promise me to be very careful in future, and to break no more dishes."

For a minute the girl made no reply, then the ready tears brimmed again into her eyes.

"Oh! m'm, you are good—you are good," she said eagerly. "And I will try; that I will. But I'm that stupid, I never seem able to do right."

"Well, don't cry—you've cried enough to-day. Go to bed, now, and have a good night; it's long past eleven. By the way, don't I hear you up very early in the morning?"

Martha's room was over mine.

"Yes m'm. Now it's so cold I get up at a quarter to six to make tea for the other servants. They like a cup in bed in the mornings."

She said it in all simplicity, and I made no comment upon the communication. If it had been my own house But it wasn't, and I had no excuse for interference.

* * * * *

I bought Martha a thick stuff gown—and she needed it. Winter, which set in late that year, made up for its loitering by an intense severity. I could barely keep myself warm, even with the help of a big fire in my bedroom; Martha's little chamber next to the great water-cistern must have been bitterly cold. It contained no fireplace, and Mrs. Norris, whose fear of fire amounted to a craze, would not allow the use of a gas-stove. In all weathers, at all hours, Martha ran the errands of the household. She was up early, she went to bed late; how, when she got there, she contrived to sleep at all, is a mystery to me, save that youth and hopefulness are potent to achieve miracles. The bitter cold froze our tempers below zero; we were fractious and difficult to please, and Martha, as usual, bore the brunt of everybody's dissatisfaction; yet, in spite of her difficult lot, the girl seemed to expand and flourish. She looked very neat in her new frock, and I noticed that her hair was arranged more loosely, so that the fluffy little curls about her forehead showed to advantage. This was the result of a chance remark of mine—whether wise or not I am now uncertain. When, at last, winter left us, and the streets of London broke into an epidemic of violets and of primroses, Martha had grown into a positively pretty girl.

I had

I had a chat with her one morning in April, and I learnt the reason of her altered looks. Martha had got a "young man"—a young man who, she believed, really cared for her, and wished to marry her. Meantime they intended "to keep company" together. All this she confided to me shyly, with many blushes, and I—whom love and youth seemed alike to have deserted—I sighed a little as I listened to her.

Perhaps because I envied her somewhat, perhaps because (now that the girl was comparatively happy) she no longer appealed to my warmest sympathies, I did not, from this time, take so keen an interest in her. And for this I have many times, especially since my own life warmed under a new sunshine, reproached myself.

Martha was much happier than she had been, but Martha would have been glad of a little sympathy from me all the same. She had grown accustomed to my interest in her; but now, I fear, she looked for it in vain. She used sometimes to linger beside the door when she came into my bedroom, and once, looking up quickly, I caught a wistful expression on her face which it hurts me now to remember. But there was much to occupy me just then, and Martha had her lover; I did not consider that she needed me.

I wonder how far, and how often, we are responsible for the misfortunes of those who live under the same roof, and yet are not upon the same level, with ourselves. I wonder how often a frank word of warning, of sympathy, or of advice would save our servant girls from the miserable marriages, or the still more cruel abandonments, which so frequently become their portion. I don't know. Perhaps no one of us can stand between another and her fate; perhaps a hundred impalpable differences of thought, custom, and education build a wall between us and our servants, which

which only a very rare love and sympathy can overclimb. I can't be sure; but—be that as it may—I never think of Martha, and of Martha's patient service and uncomplaining diligence, without a pang of self-reproach. I was old enough to be her mother, and, since her mistress would not dream of doing so, I ought to have kept an eye upon her. But I grew accustomed to her coming and going; to her anxious, flushed little face as she handed the dishes at meal times; to the sound of her heavy feet as, when everyone else had gone to bed, she climbed the carpetless ladder to her attic under the roof, and I forgot how eagerly, in so dreary a life, she must welcome a little freedom and a little love.

* * * * *

I was away for some time in the early summer, and, on my return, I found that Martha's place was filled by a stranger. I made instant inquiries. Mrs. Norris answered, with full information. Amy drew herself up in prim and conscious rectitude. She was to be married in the autumn, and could afford to look with severity upon the frailty of a servant maid.

Martha, it appeared, had got herself into trouble. Martha, like Eliza, had been dismissed at once, without a character. She and her meagre baggage—the same bonnet-box with which she had arrived, and a rather larger brown-paper parcel—had been turned out of the house at an hour's notice. She had begged for my address, but that, in order to save me from annoyance, had been withheld from her.

I said very little—what was the use?—but I found out the name of the Surrey village from which she had come to us, and I went down there in the course of the week. My memory of the girl, as so often happens, was more pathetic than her actual presence had been. I felt uneasy until I could get news of her.

It was June weather in the heart of Surrey—that still June weather which is the essence of an English summer. The lanes were sweet with dog-roses ; the vines on Martha's cottage home were already covered with many small bunches of quaint green fruit. The air was soft and full of perfume ; the tiny garden was ablaze with old-fashioned flowers.

Martha's mother was at home—a tall, frail woman, aged prematurely by poverty and the stress of early motherhood. She received me, wondering ; but, when I explained my errand, she burst into sudden tears. I do not know whether grief or anger held the uppermost place in her heart ; certainly it never occurred to her that she was to blame for sending her girl, unprepared, into a world of danger and temptation.

She could give me no news of her daughter—there was no news to give. Martha had never come home ; her mother evidently did not expect her to do so. She had stepped over the threshold of 127 Underwood Terrace, and had disappeared into that outside world which, to such as she, shows little of mercy, and even less of sympathy and comprehension.

Her mother hardly desires to see her again ; and I—though I do not forget her—I recall her only as a pathetic memory which, each year, grows less and less distinct.

On the Yealm

By A. Chevallier Tayler

Voyages dans les Yeux

Par Dauphin Meunier

VAISSEAUX, impatients à l'heure du départ
D'éployer l'éventail de vos sillons de moire,
N'avez-vous pas de pauvres âmes sans histoire,
Des âmes comme nous éprises de hasard ?

Ne poursuivons-nous pas les mêmes rêves d'or ?
N'ai-je pas comme vous perdu la tramontane,
Interrogé le ciel et la mer océane,
Et touché terre hélas ! bien loin du Labrador. . . .

Mais aussi, loin des bords dont vous faisiez le tour,
J'aventurais alors mes périlleux voyages,
Voulant, pour découvrir le plus beau des rivages,
Des chemins qui n'aient pas ici-bas de retour.

Ainsi, j'ai vu des yeux s'entr'ouvrir plus troublants
Que le soulèvement de la mer courroucée,
Ou calmes et sur qui la paupière abaissée
Semblait en son repos l'aile des goëlands ;

Des

Des yeux noyés de nuit, opaques et profonds
Dans leur douleur muette ou leur obscure joie,
Comme l'eau d'une mare insondée où tournoie
Parfois un ancien mort, surgi de ses bas-fonds ;

D'autres avaient si clairs leurs globes transparents !
D'autres, en leur couleur de pierre aventurine,
Comme on voit dans les flots la roche sous-marine,
Pour un visible écueil m'en cachaient de plus grands.

Sur ceux-là les sourcils recourbés doucement
Paraissaient l'arc du ciel qui monte et puis décline,
Ou bien, épais et noirs, annonçaient la bruine,
Ou, rejoints et froncés, un long déchaînement.

Et j'en ai vu, pareils à l'anse d'un beau port,
Saluer mes couleurs d'éclatantes fanfares ;
J'apercevais de loin le feu certain des phares. . . .
Et je restai longtemps captif de leurs cils d'or.

Ainsi, tantôt en proie au calme décevant,
Tantôt frêle jouet de vaines étendues,
Revenant sans fortune et mes peines perdues,
O vaisseaux ! comme vous j'ai naufragé souvent.

Maintenant

Maintenant des yeux bleus dans leurs eaux m'ont ancré ;
Et si je voulais fuir, carène surannée,
Ces yeux d'un pur azur de Méditerranée,
Leurs digues retiendraient mon cœur désemparé.

Heureux vaisseaux, pressés de l'heure du départ,
Eployez donc sans moi vos sillages de moire ;
Sans moi recommencez l'aventureuse histoire
Des âmes vainement éprises de hasard.

Two Drawings

By Norman Garstin

I. Trengwainton

II. A Portrait



The Web of Maya

By Ella D'Arcy

I

Le Tas is the name of the land lying at the southern extremity of the Isle of Saint Maclou. It would form a separate islet by itself, but that it is joined to the larger one by an isthmus, a wall of rock, of such dizzy height, of such sheer descent, that the narrow road on top gropes falteringly its perilous way from side to side.

The fishermen of Saint Maclou, who are also its farmers, its field-labourers, its coachmen, when driving a party of trippers over to Le Tas, get down at the beginning of the Coupée, as this strange isthmus is called, and, in their courteous broken English, invite their fares to get down too. Then, holding the horse by the bridle, and walking backwards before him, the driver leads him over the Coupée, turning an anxious eye this side and the other, to see that the wheels keep within the meagre limits: for, a careless movement here—a false step—and you would be precipitated down a clear three hundred feet to the sea below. But it is only an experienced fisherman who will take you over the Coupée at all. If a young man happens to be driving, he will send you into

Le

Le Tas on foot, while he smokes his cigar, as he waits for you in safety at the Saint Maclou end.

Le Tas, as its name suggests, is just a mound or heap of rocks. Flung up there by the sea, ages ago, the same sea has already so undermined it, so under-tunnelled it, that with a few ages more it must crumble in, and sink again to the ocean bed from which it came.

There are very few houses on Saint Maclou ; besides the Seigneurie, the Rectory, and the Belle Vue Hotel, perhaps only some forty homesteads and cottages. On Le Tas there are but five all told. You come upon four of these shortly after crossing the Coupée. Grouped together in a hollow which hides them from the road, they are still further hidden by the trees planted to shelter them from the great westerly gales. But, should you happen to make your way down to them, you would discover a homely and genial picture : little gardens ablaze with flowers, tethered cows munching the grass, fowls clacking, pigeons preening themselves and cooing, children playing on the thresholds, perhaps a woman, in the black sun-bonnet of the Islands, hanging her linen out to dry, between the gnarled apple trees of the little orchard on the right.

When you have left these cottages behind you, Le Tas grows wilder and more barren with every step you take. At first you walk through gorse and bracken ; patches of purple heather contrast with straggling patches of golden ragwort. But, further on, nothing grows from the thin layer of wind-carried soil, save a short grass, spread out like a mantle of worn green velvet, through which bare granite knees and elbows protrude at every point. You see no sign of life, but a goat or two browsing on the steep declivities, the rabbits scudding among the ferns, the rows of cormorants standing in dark sedateness on the rocks below. You hear

hear nothing but the strange complaining cry of the sea-gull, as it floats above your head on wide-spreading motionless wings, and draws, as by an invisible string, a swift-flying shadow far behind it, over the sunny turf.

Here, at the very end of Le Tas, facing the sea, stands the fifth house, a low squalid cottage, or rather a row of cottages, built of wood, and tarred over, with a long, unbroken, shed-like roof of slate. It has no garden, no yard, nor any sort of enclosure, but stands set down barely there upon the grass, as a child sets down a toy-house upon a table.

It was built to lodge the miners, when, forty years since, great hopes were entertained of extracting silver from the granite of Le Tas. Shafts were sunk, a plant imported, a row of half-a-dozen one-roomed cottages run up on the summit of the rock. But the little silver that was found never paid the expenses of working. The mines were long ago abandoned, though the stone chimneys of their shafts still raise their heads among the bracken, and, white-washed over, serve as extra landmarks to the boatmen out at sea.

The cottages had been long disused, or only intermittently inhabited, until, one day, Philip Le Mesurier, of Jersey, called upon the Seigneur, and offered to rent them for himself. It was just after Le Mesurier's six years of unhappy married life had come to an end. Mrs. Le Mesurier had, one night, without any warning, left Rozaine Manor, taking her little son with her, and she had absolutely refused to go back, or to live with her husband again. There had been a great scandal. The noise of it had spread through the islands. It had even reached Saint Maclou. Women said that Le Mesurier had ill-used his wife shamefully, had beaten her before the servants, had habitually permitted himself the most disgusting language. He was known to have the Le Mesurier violent temper; he was suspected of having the Le Mesurier taste

for

for drink. Lily Le Mesurier, on the other hand, was spoken of as the sweetest, the most long-suffering of God's creatures, a martyred angel, against whom, though she was young and pretty, no worse fault could be alleged than that she was "clever" and read "deep" books. A most devoted mother, it was only when she at last realised that she must not expose her child to the daily degradation of his father's example, that she had finally determined upon a step so inexpressibly painful to her feelings as a separation.

A few men shrugged their shoulders; said they should like to hear Le Mesurier's side of the story; but knew they would never hear it, as he was much too proud to stoop to self-excusings.

The Seigneur of Saint Maclou was among those whose sympathies went with Le Mesurier. They had a club acquaintanceship in Jersey. He welcomed him to Saint Maclou; converted the "Barracks," as the cottages on Le Tas were called, into a single house, more or less convenient; and hoped that during the short time Le Mesurier would probably remain on the island, he would come often to the Seigneurie.

The young man thanked him, sent over a little furniture, came himself, with his guns and his fishing tackle, and took up his residence in the Barracks. But he went very seldom to the Seigneurie, where he ran the risk of meeting visitors from Jersey; and when this had happened a second time, he went there no more. And he stayed on at Le Tas long after the reason he had given for his presence—that he had come for a holiday, to sketch, to shoot, to fish—had ceased to find credence. He stayed on through the autumn, through the winter, through the spring; he neither fished, nor shot, nor painted; he held no intercourse with anyone; he lived entirely alone. The only person with whom he ever exchanged a word was Monsieur Chauchat, the French pastor.

pastor. Sometimes, in the evening, Le Mesurier would walk over to Saint Maclou, and smoke a pipe at the Rectory; sometimes, when the weather was tempting, the old clergyman, who liked him and pitied him, would come up in the afternoon to pay a visit to the Barracks; but these meetings between them were rare, and, as Le Mesurier grew more moody, and Chauchat more feeble, they became rarer still.

But one day, in the dirty living-room of his cottage, Le Mesurier sat and entertained an unexpected and most unwelcome guest.

Outside the window nothing was visible but whiteness—an opaque, luminous, sun-suffused whiteness, which obliterated earth and sky and sea. For Le Tas, and Saint Maclou, and the whole Island Archipelago, were enveloped in one of those wet and hurrying mists so common here in August. It blew from the north-east; broke against the high cliffs of Saint Maclou, as a river breaks against a boulder; overflowed the top; lay in every valley like some still inland lake; and, pouring down every headland on the south and west, swept out again to sea.

The cottage on Le Tas, at all times solitary, was this afternoon completely cut off from the rest of the world.

Le Mesurier's living-room, in its dirt and its disorder, showed plainly that no woman ever came there. Unwashed cooking utensils and crockery littered up the hearth and dresser; the baize cover and cushions of the jonquière, often lain upon, were never shaken or cleaned; rusting guns, disordered fishing tackle, canvases, a battered oil-paint box, spoke of occupations thrown aside and tastes forgotten. On a table in the window were writing-materials, a couple of dog-eared books, a tobacco-jar, a pipe,

pipe, and a bottle of whisky. These last, of all the articles in the room, alone showed the lustre which comes from frequent use.

The host's appearance matched his surroundings. He wore a dirty flannel shirt, a ragged, paint-stained coat, burst canvas shoes. His hands were unwashed; his hair and beard were uncombed, and neither had been touched by scissors for the last six months.

The guest, on the contrary, was clean, fragrant, irreproachable at every point; in a light grey summer suit, and brown boots; with glossy linen, and glossy, well-kept finger-nails. He had a trick of drawing these together in an even row over the palm of his hand, while he contemplated them admiringly, his head a little on one side. The dabs of light reflected from their surface made them look like a row of polished pink shells. Le Mesurier remembered this trick of old, and hated Shergold for it, but not more than he hated him for everything else.

Shergold, on his arrival, had asked for something to eat; and Le Mesurier had taken bread and cheese from the cupboard, and flung them down on the table before him, and had filled a great tin jug—one of the curious tin jugs never seen elsewhere than in the Islands—with cider from the cask in the corner.

"Yes," Shergold was saying, "we were two hours late; and, but that old Hamon piloted us, we might never have got here at all. I don't believe any one but Hamon could have kept us off the rocks to-day. I only hope we shall make better time going back, or I shall lose the boat for Jersey. That would mean staying in Jacques-le-Port until Monday, and I'm anxious to get to Lily at once. She will be so glad to know I have seen you, to hear all about you."

Le Mesurier's dull, quiescent hate sprang suddenly into activity. He felt he could have throttled the man who sat so calmly on the other side of the table, eating, and speaking between his mouthfuls

of

of Le Mesurier's wife. He could have throttled him for the unctuous correctness of his appearance, for his conventional, meaningless good looks, for those empty, showy eyes of his, which the fools who believed in him called "flashing" and "intellectual;" he could have throttled him for the air of self-satisfaction, of complacency, breathed by his whole person; he could have throttled him for the amiable lie he had just told of Lily's anxiety for news of himself, her husband. All Lily was anxious to hear, of course, was that Shergold had obtained Le Mesurier's consent to the business proposition over which they had been corresponding for so long, and which to-day was the occasion of Shergold's visit.

But he concealed his rage, and only showed his surprise at hearing that Lily was again in Jersey. For one of the many subjects of disagreement between her and himself, one of their many causes of quarrel, had been her persistent detestation of Jersey.

Shergold explained: "Yes. I hadn't time to mention it in my last letter; but Lily left London on Monday, and has gone to some very nice rooms I was able to secure for her at Beaumont. In fact, my old rooms—you will remember them—when I was at the College."

"She might at least have gone home," said Le Mesurier, with bitterness, "since I'm not there to contaminate the place. Rozaine, as she knows, is always at her service."

"Ah, yes—of course—thank you—you are very kind. But the air at Rozaine is hardly sufficiently bracing. You see, it's on account of the boy. He has been overworking at his studies, and needs sea-bathing, tonic, ozone."

The impertinence of Shergold's thanks might have stung Le Mesurier to an angry retort, but that the mention of his little

son, whom he had not seen for more than a year, turned his thoughts and feelings upon a different bent. He caught himself wishing that he could have him out here on Le Tas. The keen air, the free, out-of-door, wholesome life, would soon put health into the body, and colour into the pale little face, that rose so vividly before the father's mind. Another of the causes of dissension between Le Mesurier and Lily had been the system, inspired by Shergold, which she had rigorously insisted upon following in the training and education of the child. Every day had its regular set programme of lessons and of play; but the play consisted of formal exercise—"Calisthenics," as Shergold termed it—which at stated hours the boy was obliged to accomplish; so that, to his constrained young spirit, it no doubt became as irksome as a task. And then, Shergold, though a hearty consumer of butcher's meat in practice, was, in theory, a convinced vegetarian; and Lily, despite her husband's most earnest, most violent opposition, would allow little Phil no stronger nourishment than such as might be contained in beans and lentils.

Le Mesurier spoke aloud, impulsively. "Lily might send Phil to me for a few weeks, I think. It would do him all the good in the world. It is much healthier here than at Beaumont."

Shergold raised his eyebrows, and took a comprehensive glance round the unswept, uncleaned, undusted room.

"Oh, I'd have a woman in. I'd have all this set right," said the father, eagerly.

"You can hardly be serious," answered Shergold. "You know Lily's views. You could hardly expect her to let Phil stop here alone with you."

Le Mesurier flushed angrily.

"After all, he's my own child. If I chose to assert my rights—if I should insist on having him——"

"Oh,

"Oh, your rights!" interrupted Shergold. "Come, come. You're forgetting our agreement. The boy remains in his mother's care, and under her control, till he's one-and-twenty, and you're not to interfere."

"But it was understood that I could see him whenever I wished."

"And so you can. But you must *go* to see him; Lily can't let him leave her, to come to you. If you choose to exile yourself to Le Tas, and lead this solitary, half-savage sort of life, you can't complain that you're prevented from seeing Phil. It's your own fault. You ought to be living at Rozaine."

"Tell my wife what she ought or ought not to do, since she's fool enough to listen to you," broke out Le Mesurier hotly, "and be damned to you both! I shall do as I please. What business is it of yours where or how I live?"

Shergold shrugged his shoulders.

"You appear to be as violent in temper, and as unrestrained in language, as ever," he said calmly. "A pretty example you'd set your son! But we're straying from the point. Let's give our attention to the business that brought me here, and get it done with." He drew a large envelope from the inner breast-pocket of his coat.

"You may save yourself the trouble of opening that," Le Mesurier informed him. "Let Lily send me the boy for a month, and I'll consider the matter. Under present conditions, I refuse even to discuss it with you."

"Nonsense," said Shergold. "You know she won't send you the boy. The notion is preposterous. Now, as for these papers——"

"I refuse to discuss the matter," Le Mesurier repeated. "Send me Phil, and we'll see. But, until then, I refuse to discuss it with

with you. If Lily hesitates, use your influence with her," he added sardonically. "The notion's preposterous, if you like, but you've persuaded her to more preposterous courses still, before now. You've persuaded her to leave her husband, to give up her position, her duties; you've persuaded her to go and live in London, to be near you, to complete her education, to develop her individuality, and a lot of damned rot of that sort. Well, now, persuade her to this. Persuade her to let me have the boy for a time. Persuade her that it's for Phil's own good. And tell her roundly that I refuse absolutely to hold any kind of business discussions with either her or her agent, until I've got the boy."

"You're mad, Le Mesurier. It is I, as you know, who have consistently advised Lily, on the contrary, to remove the boy as far as possible from your influence. If you are serious in asking me now to urge her to let him come here, and live alone with you, day in and day out, for a month—really, you must be mad."

"Very good. Mad or not, you have heard my last word. And if you cannot see your way to meeting my wishes in the matter, I don't know that there's anything that need detain you here longer."

He looked significantly from Shergold to the door. The mist was lifting a little. A pale sun was just visible behind it, a disc of gold shining through a veil; and here and there, through rifts, one could catch glimpses of faint blue sky.

Shergold, vexed, hesitant, looked at his watch.

"You're wasting precious time," he said, impatiently. "What's the use of opening old sores? You know our decision about the child is irrevocably fixed. You yourself assented to it long ago. What's the sense of letting this new idea of yours—this freak—this whim, to have him here—interfere with business

of

of importance—business about which I've taken the trouble to pay you this altogether distasteful visit?"

But Le Mesurier merely opened the door, and with a gesture invited Shergold to pass out. His expression was so menacing, his gesture might so easily have transformed itself into the preparation for a blow, that Shergold instinctively moved towards the threshold.

"You refuse to consider the matter?" he asked.

"Let Lily send the boy, and I'll consider it."

"That's your last word?"

"No!" shouted Le Mesurier, suddenly losing all control of himself. "Go to Hell, you sneaking Jesuit! That's my last word." Then, finding a certain childish joy in the mere calling of names—the mere utterance of his hate, his fury: "You empty wind-bag! You low-bred pedant! You bloated mass of self-conceit! Go to Hell!"

And he flung the door to, in Shergold's astonished face.

Le Mesurier stood alone in the cottage, shaken by impotent rage. His thoughts followed Shergold going away; unsuccessful, indeed, but superior, calm, self-satisfied; full of a lofty contempt, a Pharisaic pity, for Le Mesurier's violence, for his childishness, his ineffectual profanity, his miserable mode of life. Le Mesurier could imagine Shergold telling Lily of her husband's churlish refusal to discuss the business that had taken him to Saint Maclou; of the impossible condition he had imposed; of his dirty surroundings, his neglected appearance, his brutal language, his ungovernable temper. Le Mesurier saw the disgust such a narration would inspire in his wife, the fresh justification she would find in it for all her past conduct. And he imagined how, while Shergold and Lily

Lily talked him over, Phil, the child, his son, would catch a word here and there, as children do, and would unconsciously conceive a prejudice against his father, which would influence him through life. . . . God! it was unendurable. Was there no way?

Then, all at once, he laughed. An idea had begun to push its head insidiously up from among the confusion of his thoughts. The idea surprised him, pleased him, tempted him; and, as he contemplated it, he laughed. . . .

In a moment he opened the door and hurried out, after Shergold.

The sun was again hidden, the blue rifts had closed, the mist was thicker than before. But, a little distance ahead, a dark form was silhouetted on the whiteness; and, thrilling with excitement, in a glow of irresponsible gaiety, Le Mesurier, following noiselessly over the grass, kept this form in view.

Along the meandering foot-worn track, which leads from the Barracks back over Le Tas; down through the gorse and bracken; on through the lane that skirts the tree-sheltered cottages; and so to the beginning of the Coupée, where the land falls away, and nothing is left but the narrow road that creeps tremulously over the top of the rock wall, three hundred feet high, with a precipice on either side, and the sea at the bottom: Le Mesurier stealthily followed Shergold.

And when the middle of the Coupée was reached, Le Mesurier knew that the moment had come. He acted promptly. Before there was time for speech between the men, the thing was done, and he stood there on the road alone—a startled broken cry still ringing in his ears; then, after what seemed a long interval of silence, a splash, a far-away muffled splash, from deep below, as if he had dropped a stone, wrapped in a blanket, into the water.

Le Mesurier waited till the silence grew round and complete again.

again. And presently he turned away light-heartedly, and walked back to the Barracks.

II

He was glad, very glad, that his enemy was dead.

This was the thought, this the feeling—a feeling of gladness, a thought, "But I am glad, glad, glad!"—which kept him company all the succeeding days.

The knowledge that he would never have to see him again—never again look upon his fatuous, handsome face—never again listen to his voice, his smooth, even, complacent voice—this knowledge poured through him with warm comfort.

He would lie out on the grass, in the sun, revelling in a sensasation of well-being that was almost physical, and rehearsing in memory the events as they had happened: Shergold's arrival, their conversation, Shergold's departure; the great, good, satisfying outburst of vituperation with which Le Mesurier had pursued him from his threshold; and then that brief moment of soul-filling consummation, of tangible, ponderable joy, on the Coupée.

Remorse? No, he did not feel the slightest remorse. "Remorse?—I thought a man who had killed another always felt remorse," he said to himself, with a vague sort of surprise, but with very certain exultation. Hitherto, he had accepted tacitly the conventional teachings on the subject. Bloodguiltiness must be followed by remorse, as certainly as night by morning. The slayer destroyed, along with his victim, his own peace for ever. He could no more enjoy food, rest, or pleasant indolence. And sleep—"Macbeth has murdered sleep!" He must always be haunted by the reproachful phantom of the dead, and shaken by continual ague-fits of terror, gnawed by perpetual dread, lest his crime should be discovered

discovered and brought home to him. These were the ready-made notions the truth of which Le Mesurier had taken for granted: but now he had tested them; he had tested them, and behold, they were false. After all, he told himself, every man's experience is individual; you can learn nothing from books, nothing from the experience of others. Hearsay evidence is worthless. "I am a murderer, as it is called. I should inevitably be hanged if they could prove the thing against me. And yet—remorse?" No; he felt himself to be a thousand times happier, a thousand times easier in his mind, a thousand times more contented, more at peace, than he had ever been in the days of his innocence. In killing Shergold, he had simply removed an intolerable burden from his spirit.

He found himself singing, whistling, scraps of opera, snatches of old ballads, as he went about the daily routine of preparing his food, or as he wandered hither and thither over the scant sun-burned grass of the islet. After all, Shergold had well-deserved his fate. It was owing to him that Le Mesurier's life was ruined, his home broken up, his boy separated from him, his wife's affections alienated. It was thanks to Shergold that he had come here, more than a year ago, to lead the life of a misanthrope, alone in this melancholy cottage on Le Tas.

And yet, Shergold was not his wife's lover; had never been her lover; never, Le Mesurier knew, had desired to be her lover. He thought he could almost have forgiven Shergold more easily if he *had* been her lover; the situation would have seemed, somehow, less abnormal than the actual one. But Shergold had got at her intellectually, had seduced her mind, had subjugated her spiritually. He had known her before her marriage, ever since she was a girl of sixteen. He had given her lessons in Greek, in mathematics. Possibly, had he not been a married man himself at the time, he might

might have thought of marrying her. But it was after her marriage, and after his own wife's death, about a year afterwards, that his ascendancy over her became marked, that his constant presence at Rozaine began vaguely to irritate Le Mesurier.

He was such a cold, self-righteous, solemn, pompous pedant, and withal such an ass, so shallow, so empty, so *null*, Le Mesurier felt. His pose of mental superiority was so unwarranted, so odious. He betrayed in a hundred inflections of his voice, in perpetual supercilious upliftings of his eyebrows, the contempt he entertained for Lily's husband, as for a mere eating, drinking, sport-loving animal, without culture, without fineness, without acquirements, but unfairly endowed by Fortune with large estates and a charming wife; a wife who, in other hands, with a wise and discerning helpmeet, might (to use one of Shergold's own irritating catch-words), "have raised the pyramid of self-culture to the highest point." Shergold imagined himself to be like Goethe, to resemble him physically, as well as temperamentally, and in the character of his mind; and he was constantly adopting, and adapting to the exigencies of the moment, tag-ends of the poet's phrases. He had a deep-seated, intimate conviction—a conviction based not on evidence, not on experience, not on work accomplished, but born, full-fledged, of his own instinctive egotism—that he was, not merely a clever man, not merely a man of uncommon parts, but a Great Man, a Man of transcendent Genius. It was as a Man of Genius that Lily Le Mesurier looked up to him; it was as a Man of Genius that he looked down upon Lily Le Mesurier's husband. And yet Philip, modest enough, and unpretentious, could not help realising in his heart, that, of the two, he himself was, in point of real native intelligence, the better man.

Shergold displayed a silent commiseration for Lily which infuriated Le Mesurier. He taught her to commiserate herself.

She

She turned to him for sympathy in all her imagined troubles; she sought his advice on every point. She put the management of the child virtually into his hands. He was always at Rozaine. He came up there every day, directly his duties at the College left him free. Lily kept him to dinner three or four times a week. If Le Mesurier grumbled, she complained that he grudged her her only amusement—good conversation; that, save Professor Shergold, she never met any one worth listening to, worth talking to. He was the only man who understood her. Life was dull enough, Heaven knew, at Rozaine; and, if Philip was going to object to the Professor's visits, she would not be able to live there at all. It was an effective threat, the value of which Lily thoroughly appreciated, a threat she did not scruple to employ as often as occasion demanded, that she would "not be able to go on living at Rozaine;" for Le Mesurier had a dumb passion for the place, and an immense pride in it: it was his home, his birthplace, it had been in his family for generations. His love for Lily was a passion too. To live at Rozaine with her—with children possibly—he had pictured to himself as the ideal of absolute happiness. He could as little imagine himself living anywhere else, as he could imagine himself living without Lily. So what could he do but submit, and confirm Lily's constant invitations to Shergold, with such cordiality as he could feign, and sit silent at the head of his table, while these two talked radicalism, agnosticism, blatant futilities, cheap enthusiasms of all sorts? The Emancipation of Woman, the Abolition of Monarchy, State Socialism, Disestablishment. . . . And Le Mesurier was conservative, as all the Islanders are, and religious as men go. That is to say, he honoured the Church in which he had been brought up, and in which all those whom he had cared for had lived and died.

It troubled him, therefore, that, when little Phil began to talk,

Lily

Lily protested against the child's being taught any prayers. The Professor, she said, held it criminal to fill a child's mind with discredited theologies. No mention of the Christian Myth should be permitted in his presence till he was old enough to judge, to discriminate for himself. "It was just as criminal as it would be to offer him innutritious or deleterious food for his physical sustenance," Shergold explained. When Phil was three years old, Le Mesurier put his foot down, and declared that the child must be brought up a Christian. There was a great scene, at the end of which Le Mesurier's anger exploded in curses; and Lily seized the opportunity for the appropriate sneer that "if that sort of language was Christian, she preferred the language of Atheists." Shergold urged, "But my dear fellow! Be reasonable. You don't want to teach your son demoralising superstitions. The existence of a God, the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth—I can prove to you the absurdity of both in five minutes, if you will listen. It's monstrous to instil such unscientific and pernicious dogmas into the brain of a three-year-old infant." Le Mesurier took Phil on his knee, alone in the nursery, and taught him the simple prayer he himself had used as a child.

After their discussion, and Le Mesurier's burst of profanity, Shergold had left the house in injured dignity; and Lily had retired to her room, and remained there for forty-eight hours. At the end of that time Le Mesurier was reduced to submission. Lily insisted on his going down to the College, and bringing the Professor back to dinner. The old footing was resumed, and things went from bad to infinitely worse. Every periodic outbreak on Le Mesurier's part was more violent than the last, and every reparation exacted from him was more galling. The legend of his violence, of his ill-conduct, began to spread about the Island, and to form one of the chosen themes of gossip at the club, and

and at St. Hélier's tea-parties. The absolutely platonic nature of the Professor's relations with Lily seemed to be understood, for in a place where scandal is peculiarly rife, their friendship never excited any.

In the course of six years Le Mesurier had become a cipher in his own house, and Shergold ruled by suggestion in small things as well as in great. Le Mesurier covered an intolerable hatred with a sullen and morose manner, and had endured with apparent insensibility many keener mortifications than the one which finally brought matters to a crisis.

He had come home tired one day from the golf links, and found Shergold, as usual, discoursing to Lily in the drawing-room. Le Mesurier threw himself into an easy chair, conscious of no more than his habitual annoyance. The drawing-room tea had been taken away, and it wanted about half-an-hour to dinner. Shergold commented on his fagged appearance, and offered him refreshment.

"Come now, do take a glass of wine," he said, "or some brandy and soda;" with all the cordial civility of a man dispensing hospitality from his own hearth-rug. "Let me ring for it."

But before he could touch the bell, Le Mesurier was on his feet, his temper boiling over, his mouth spluttering forth indignant protestations. The infernal insolence of the man, to play the host to him in his own house! "By God," he cried, "I think this really is the limit!"

The Professor, always coldly superior, and deaf to Lily's entreaties where his own dignity was at stake, took up his hat, and left the room. A moment later he was passing before the windows on his way to the lodge-gates.

Then came a scene with Lily, more shattering than anything Le Mesurier could have imagined. In her cool little voice, she said the

the cruellest things. Her tongue cut like the lash of a cunningly contrived whip, and she brought it down again and again on the most sensitive places of his soul; those secret places which no mere enemy could have discovered, but which, because of his love for her, he had exposed fearlessly to her mercy. His pain turned to anger: his anger became really a brief madness. He had suddenly found himself standing over her, holding her by the shoulder, shaking her violently. "Damn you, you little devil!" he had shouted, and his fingers had thrilled to strike her on her pale provocative face; but instinct, rather than deliberate forbearance, had saved him from this, and he had gripped her shoulder instead. Then at that very moment the door had opened, and Harris had entered to announce dinner. She had stood and looked at him with narrowing, malignant eyes—God, those eyes he had so worshipped!—"You need not strike me before the servants," she had said, just as though he had been in the habit of striking her, and she had raised her clear voice a little, obviously that the man might hear. Le Mesurier had hastily moved back a step, but his cuff-link had caught in the filmy stuff that filled in the neck of her dress, and a portion of it had torn away, and hung in a long fluttering strip from his sleeve. She had made no movement to cover her bare neck; on the contrary, she pushed up her shoulder through the gap, and turned her eyes, now tender, grieving eyes, to look at the five angry crimson marks rising up on the white skin. Harris, of course, had seen them plainly too. She had refused to go into dinner, she had gone to her room; when, later, Le Mesurier went there to ask forgiveness, he could not find her. The boy's crib in the next room was empty. His wife had left Rozaine, and taken the child with her. She had gone to an hotel in St. Hélier's for the night, and left for her father's house in England the next morning.

She

She had steadfastly refused to return, and Shergold had supported her in her refusal. He had shortly after this given up his appointment at Saint Hélier's for a better one in London, where he had lived near Lily, influencing her as much as ever, seeing her, doubtless, every day. In the few letters which Lily had written her husband since the separation—letters dealing always with points of business, with money arrangements, rendered necessary by their altered relations—Le Mesurier recognised, in the cold, judicial tone, the well-arranged phrases, Shergold's guiding hand. He at first had answered them briefly, latterly not at all, and it was his final persistent silence which had brought his enemy in person to Le Tas, and delivered him into his hands.—Oh, he was glad he had killed him! Shergold had ruined his life, and he had taken Shergold's. They were quits at last. No, he felt no remorse.

But neither did he feel any fear; and this surprised him, for that the transgressor should fear discovery and retribution was within every man's experience. He began to ask himself how this was, and he came to believe that it arose from the fact that he had in reality no cause for fear. Discovery was practically an impossibility. In the first place, no one knew that Shergold had come to Saint Maclou at all. He had told Le Mesurier it was a sudden idea which had occurred to him during dinner, on which he had acted the same night. Then the boat had been so late, that, to save time, he had not gone into the hotel, where he might have been remembered, but had come up to Le Tas over the cliffs, without notice or recognition from anybody. That he should have been seen between leaving the cottage and reaching the Coupée was impossible. Le Mesurier had followed him closely enough

enough all the way to know that no one else had been at any time in sight. So thick was the mist, that a third person, to have seen him at all, must have passed within arm's length. From all danger of an eye-witness to his being in Shergold's company, or to the supreme moment on the Coupée, Le Mesurier felt secure.

But there was the chance that the body might be recovered. It might be washed up on the Island or elsewhere. The body of young Hamon, who had fallen from the cliffs the previous summer, while searching for gulls' eggs, had been found three weeks later, so far away as the Isle of Wight. It had been unrecognisable, for the face was completely destroyed, but it had been identified by a pocket-knife with the lad's name engraved upon the haft. Le Mesurier wondered whether there was anything on Shergold's person to identify him. Letters? The water would have reduced these to pulp. A ring? The hands and fingers were always the parts first attacked by the fish.

He recalled the gruesome stories told by the boatmen as they row you from point to point, or which the women repeat to each other during the long winter evenings as they sit over the peat fires: stories of the cave-crabs, of the voracious fish which swarm round these coasts; of the mackerel which come in shoals, hundreds of thousands strong, roughening the calm sea like a wind, making a noise like thunder or the engines of some great steamer, as they cut through the surface of the water in pursuit of the little fish that fly before them. One story goes that a man swimming out from Grève de la Mauve unwittingly struck into such a shoal, and in an instant was pulled down by a million tenacious mouths and never seen again. . . . No, there was not much fear that Shergold's body would be found.

But even supposing the body were found and were recognised; even supposing Shergold's movements could be traced to Saint Maclou,

Maclou, that his visit to Le Mesurier could be proved: there was no iota of evidence to connect Le Mesurier with his death. Le Mesurier's policy would be frankly to acknowledge the visit, to describe how Shergold had left him, and to call to remembrance the mist which had prevailed on that day. What more natural than that Shergold should have met with a misadventure on the way back, have walked over the cliff's edge instead of keeping to the path, have missed his footing and fallen from the Coupée? Such misadventures were constantly happening, even among the fishermen. There was not a point on the Island which was not already the scene of some such tragedy. Le Mesurier assured himself he had no cause for fear.

But as the days and weeks went by, what did surprise him exceedingly was that he received no communication from Lily to acquaint him with the Professor's disappearance. It had seemed certain that she would write. For long ago Shergold must have been missed; first by his landlady, then by his friends. There would have been much speculation, anxious enquiries, newspaper paragraphs, in which his person would be described, a reward offered. Then, as time went on, and nothing was heard of him, the anxiety must have grown. There must have been an immense noise, a tremendous amount of talk. For he was, in his way, a well-known man, a person of consideration; he held a responsible post. Le Mesurier never saw a newspaper; not more than a dozen, perhaps, were read in the whole of Saint Maclou, and these were chiefly local papers from Jacques-le-Port; but he could imagine the excitement of the London Press, the articles which were being written on the subject, the letters, the suggestions, which every day must be bringing forth.

And

And nevertheless, Le Mesurier received no notification from Lily; no news of any sort, no rumour touching Shergold's fate was ever carried to Le Tas. The strangeness of such a silence could only confirm him in the belief that Shergold had spoken to no one of his intended journey to Saint Maclou, and he again told himself he was absolutely safe. He turned to dismiss the subject from his mind.

But he found to his astonishment that he could not dismiss it, that it had become a fixed idea, an obsession, which overpowered his will. He was as impotent to chase Shergold from his waking thoughts as from his troubled nightly dreams. If he looked up suddenly to the window, it was because he fancied he had seen Shergold's head passing rapidly by; if he caught himself listening intently in the stillness, he knew a moment later that it was because he fancied Shergold had spoken, and that the vibrations of his voice still shook the air. It was a horrible disappointment to learn that instead of ridding himself of Shergold, as he had hoped, he seemed to have bound himself up with him inseparably for ever. While he had been alive, Le Mesurier, once out of his presence, had often forgotten him for days at a time; now that he was dead, Le Mesurier could think of nothing else.

But a more curious development was, that as time went by, he noticed that his old, hearty, satisfying hatred for the man was fading away. Does not absence always weaken hatred? And when you realise the absence to be eternal, to be the immutable absence of death, is not hatred extinguished? Love is stronger than death, for love is positive, affirmative. But hatred? Hatred is negative; hatred is a manifestation of the transitory Nay, not of the everlasting Yea. Is it possible to hate the dead?

Le Mesurier no longer hated the man he had killed. A faint, hesitant sort of consideration, even of fellow-feeling for him, began gradually to edge its way in among his thoughts. He would sometimes try to put himself in Shergold's place; he would try to reconstruct the past from Shergold's point of view.

He found he could no longer persuade himself that Shergold had been conscious of the evil he had wrought. On the contrary, he recognised that the man had been honest according to his lights; that he had committed no crime against the accepted code. He might have acquired his influence over Lily, through no wish, no effort of his own. He had been one of those showy characters whom women always worship; he had possessed that superficial glittering cleverness that always catches a woman's fancy, he had talked with the fluent self-assurance which always wins a woman's approval. Probably he had never realised how obnoxious his presence at Rozaine was to Le Mesurier. He was sufficiently proud to have withdrawn from a society where he was not wanted, but his self-conceit was too magnificent for him ever to imagine such a contingency possible. And then, no doubt, his sense of conscious rectitude had rendered him particularly obtuse. Had he been playing the rôle of lover, a guilty conscience would have made him more sensitive to Le Mesurier's uncordial attitude. Looking back upon it all now, Le Mesurier could almost pity him for such blindness.

One day, lying in a hollow of the cliff, hidden from every eye but that of cormorant or sea-gull, playing abstractedly with a pebble which found itself under his fingers, he saw a yard away from him a sharp-nosed, grey-coated mole running from one point to another across the grass. He shot the pebble from his hand, and

and the little beast rolled over dead. He took it up, and looked at it curiously. He smoothed with his fingers its warm, velvety coat. He was sorry he had killed it. A second ago it had been enjoying the sunshine, the warm air, its own sense of well-being. And now it was utterly destroyed, utterly annihilated, and no one could restore to it the life which he had wantonly taken.

The thought of Shergold, always present at the back of his mind, pressed forward imperatively. Shergold had not believed in soul or immortality. He had believed that with death the life of a man comes to an end, just as does the life of a mouse. Le Mesurier had often listened, perforce, to his dogmatising on such views to Lily ; to his proclaiming that each individual life is but a flash of light between two eternities of darkness ; that just as the body returns to the elements from which it came, so the spirit is reabsorbed into the forces and energies which move the world. And because Shergold had no belief in another life, he had set an immense value upon this one. In his self-engrossed, pedantic way, he had thoroughly enjoyed every hour, every moment of it. Supposing his views were true, then the greatest injury one could inflict on such a man would be to deprive him of this life which he prized, suddenly to extinguish him like a candle, to annihilate him like this poor little mole.

He laid the body of the mole down upon the turf, and walked away. He no longer sang or whistled to himself. The monotonous days seemed intolerably long.

III

Three months had gone by. Le Mesurier, in the solitude of Le Tas, had suffered every pang a guilty conscience can inflict, had been through every phase of remorse and of despair.

The

The burden on his mind was growing intolerably heavy. Every moment it cried out to him that he must share it with another, or be crushed beneath its weight. He would have gone down to see the Pastor, but that to do so he must cross the Coupée. He had not the courage actually to pass the spot from which his thoughts were never long absent. And while his mind tossed distressfully this way and that, Monsieur Chauchat chanced to come up to see him.

The sight of a real human face, the sound of a real human voice, unlocked his heart, set his tongue going. In spite of the old man's many attempted interruptions, he poured out the whole story ; all the injuries, real or fancied, he had received at Shergold's hands, his own hatred for him, the man's fate, his own impotent repentance. "And now," he said, simply, when he had concluded, "I wish to give myself up. Tell me what I am to do."

Chauchat looked at him with infinite pity, and showed neither horror nor surprise. Le Mesurier was even conscious of a certain movement of indignation within his own bosom, that any one should hear of the murder of a fellow-creature so composedly.

"You must give up this kind of life," said the Pastor gently. "It is terribly bad for you. You must have society, you must travel."

Le Mesurier was amazed at such irrelevance. He looked at Chauchat curiously. He thought him aged, whiter, feebler than ever before. He wondered whether he still had all his faculties. And he answered impatiently, "But what has that to do with what I have been telling you ? "

"You must take care," said the old man ; "solitude brings delusions, hallucinations ; to indulge in them is to shake the mind's stability. You must come back into the world. You must mix with other men."

He

He divined that Chauchat believed him to be dreaming. This was natural perhaps; how could the good, simple-minded old clergyman believe in the reality of such a crime? But he must convince him of the miserable truth. He must begin again and describe it all more circumstantially. He must go on until he saw conviction dawn in the eyes that now looked at him with such friendly pity, until he saw that pity change to aversion and fear. He began over again.

But Chauchat laid a hand upon his arm.

"One moment! You say you killed this man?"

"Yes, I killed him."

"You threw him over the Coupée?"

"I followed him from the house, and threw him over the Coupée."

"No, my poor boy; no, no, no! Thank God, you did not. Thank God, you are dreaming. You have had some strange, some horrible delusion. But Shergold is alive, is well, I have but just now come from him. He, indeed, is the reason of my visit. I come as a messenger from him, a mediator between him and you."

Le Mesurier sat there stunned, dazed, vacant. Was Chauchat mad? The old man's voice buzzed in his ears; he was still talking, explaining how Shergold had come over by the morning's boat; how he had called at the parsonage, and told the story of his last visit to Le Mesurier, of the deed of assignment, and of Le Mesurier's refusal to sign it; of the pressing need there was that it should be signed; how he had begged Chauchat to use his influence with Le Mesurier, and so Chauchat was here, while Shergold was staying till to-morrow at the Belle Vue Hotel, and was quite prepared to meet Le Mesurier on amicable terms, if he would go down there and see him.

Was

Was Chauchat mad? Yes, clearly. How otherwise could he imagine that he had come from Shergold, that he had spoken with a dead man? Shergold's death—that was the one certain fact in all this bewildering world. He had sat there, at the table, just where Chauchat was seated now. They had quarrelled. Le Mesurier had followed him from that very door, out into the mist. . . .

But all at once a point of doubt pierced his soul. *Had* he followed Shergold? Had he in truth followed Shergold out into the mist?

Was Chauchat mad? Or—or—was he mad himself? Something inside his head throbbed so violently, he could not even think. He sat stunned and dazed by the table holding his head in his hands, while the old man talked on. But while he sat there in dumb, inert confusion, his sub-conscious brain was at work, rearranging the past, disentangling the threads of illusion from those of reality, arranging these on this side, those on that, clearly, unmistakably. And when all was ready, suddenly the web of deception fell from before his eyes, and he saw clearly. Up to the moment of Shergold's leaving the cottage all had passed as he remembered it: the rest had been a mere phantasmal creation of his own brain.

His hands were clean of blood, he had committed no crime, he might go where he chose, he was guiltless, he was free. And—and during all the past months, when he had been tortured with self-condemnations, Shergold had been living his usual happy, respectable and respected life, seeing Lily every day, seeing the child Oh! Le Mesurier's feelings underwent a complete revulsion; his remorse shrivelled up, his pity vanished, his old hatred returned reinforced a thousandfold—and he was filled with regret, a gnawing, an intolerable regret that his hand had failed to accomplish the sin which his heart had desired.

A Fragment

By Theo Marzials

And then it seem'd I was a bird
That dipt along the silent street.
In that strange midnight nothing stir'd,
And all was moonlight, still and sweet.

By lofty vane and roof and loft,
Aloof, aloft, where shadows hung,
Down ghostly ways that wafted soft,
Warm echoes where I sank and sung;

And lower yet by flower-set sill,
And close against her window-bars,
And still the moonlight flowed, and still,
The still dew lit the jessamine stars;

And oh! I beat against the pane,
And oh! I sang so sweet, so clear,—
I heard her wake, and pause again,
Then nearer, nearer—killing near;

And back she flung the window-rod,
The moonlight swept in, like a stream;
She drew me to her neck—Oh! God,
'Twas then I knew it was a dream!

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